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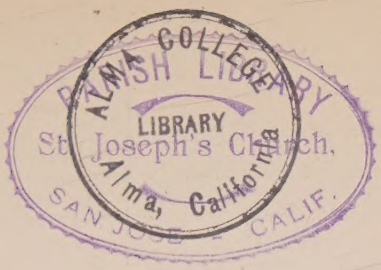

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The Curé d'Ars.

(1785–1859.)

BY LADY HERBERT.

Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney was born in 1785 at Dardilly, a village not far from Lyons. His parents were respectable and pious people of the farmer class; his mother was specially noted for her great and deep religious feeling; and it was to her teaching that M. Vianney used to say he owed all his holiest impressions. But from a child the little Jean Marie was noted for his goodness and his love of God. Prayer was his delight, even at four years old, when, being one day missed, he was found on his knees in a corner of the stable. His loving mother would go every morning herself to wake her children, so that she might make them offer their little hearts to God and secure that this should be their first thought. When she saw her little boy's extraordinary devotion, her one idea was that he should some day become a priest. But she had many trials to go through ere this hope could be realised. First came the French Revolution, which swept away both throne and altar. Their parish church was closed—their priests exiled or murdered. Few and far between were the blessed seasons when the faithful were summoned to some carefully-guarded hiding-place, where Mass was said by some fugitive priest, at the peril of his life and theirs.

Little Jean Marie was then eight years old, and had the charge of the cows and sheep on his father's farm, leading them out every day to browse in the fields near his home. Our Lord made this the school in which the boy, like another St. Vincent de Paul, was trained for the interior life. He became also a little apostle among his companions, to whom he would often speak of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and having placed a little picture of her against a willow tree (which is still shown) he would frequently say a "Hail Mary," and was never so happy as when he could induce the other shepherd-boys to do the same.

Next to God, Jean Marie loved the poor. His parents were most kind and hospitable, and his greatest delight was to help his mother to prepare their beds or their food, and to deny himself every little delicacy to add to their store. If some were children like himself, he would gather them round the fire, and coax them by pious stories to listen to him and to make acts of faith, hope and charity, and this was done so humbly and simply that none took offence, and many were touched to the heart by his words. Owing to the troubled state of the times, he did not make his first Communion till he was eleven years old, being prepared for it by some pious Sisters of the Order of St. Charles, who had taken refuge in the neighbouring parish of Ecully where his grandfather was then living. From that moment he seemed to increase every day in fervour and piety, yet without ever neglecting his home duties. His obedience became a bye-word in the family, so that his mother used to set him as an example to the rest. In the midst of the hard work he often had to do, he never lost the habit of interior prayer, nor his sense of the continual presence of God. He would often say later:—"When I was alone in the fields ploughing or sowing I would pray aloud, but when others were with me I used to pray in my heart. O those were happy days! I often used to say to myself, as I struck my hoe or my spade into the ground: 'So must I cultivate my soul, to pluck up the evil weeds and to prepare it for the good seed of the good God.'"

At last the Revolution was at an end: the priests who remained returned to their flocks; and Ecully joyfully received back one of these Confessors of the Faith, the Abbé Balley, who had often ministered to them during the days of terror, at the peril of his life. His first care was to collect the boys and young men in his parish, and it was not long before he found out the holiness of Jean Marie. The sight of this holy priest at the altar made the deepest impression on the lad: and his longing to be able to devote himself body and soul to the glory of God and the good of souls increased daily. At last he opened his heart to the Abbé Balley, who encouraged him in every way; while, so much was he beloved at Dardilly, that all the neighbours offered to share in the expense of his education. His parents gladly gave their consent: but then a terrible difficulty arose. His education had been entirely neglected: he knew no science but that of the saints: his conception was slow and his memory unretentive. Sometimes he would be entirely disheartened. But one day the bright idea struck him to go on foot, asking alms as he went, to the tomb of B. John Francis Regis, and there to ask for the power of learning enough to become a priest. His faith was rewarded and the grace was obtained in a way which astonished both his masters and himself. All seemed to augur success in his vocation, when a new and terrible blow fell upon him.

It was the autumn of 1809; Napoleon's wars had exhausted the youth of France; a fresh conscription was ordered, and Jean Marie, although inscribed on the list of students for the priesthood, found himself compelled to serve in the army, and was ordered to join his regiment at Bayonne. The grief of his family and friends may be imagined. Every effort was made in vain to find him a substitute. He alone kept up his courage and tried to submit cheerfully to the will of God. On his way to Bayonne he was taken so ill that he was placed in the Lyons hospital, and afterwards under the care of the Sisters of St. Augustine at Roanne. There he so far recovered as to be appointed to join a detachment then forming to join the army in Spain. On the way, a stranger came up to

him and asked him why he looked so sad. Jean Marie told him his story: and the stranger begged him to follow him through woods and mountain paths, till he brought him to a lonely house where he was kindly welcomed by a newly-married couple, who gave him food and shelter, while his guide suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. The next day he was taken to a village called Noës, where he was kindly received and carefully concealed by a widow woman named Fayot, whom he spoke of later as "one of the most beautiful souls he had ever known." Here he opened a school, having changed his name to that of Jerome to conceal himself from the search of the soldiers.

The painful suspense of his parents as to his fate was at last relieved by the good widow Fayot herself, who went to Ecully to see them and assure them of his safety. In 1810 his younger brother volunteered to take his place and the exchange was accepted; so that after fourteen months' absence he was able to return to his beloved studies. He was so much beloved at Noës that everyone in the place insisted on contributing something towards his outfit—one giving him a cassock, another table-napkins, and the like. Soon after his return he was sent to the Little Seminary of Verrières, to go through his course of philosophy. Here again he had much to suffer from his fellow students, who, seeing that in intellectual acquirements he was their inferior, treated him as a simpleton. But his masters, though at first they had failed to appreciate the noble qualities of their slow and timid student, were soon filled with admiration of his uniform and consistent piety. His companions were not slow to make the same discovery, and, conscious of their previous injustice, did all in their power to show their love for and appreciation of him. In 1813 he began his study of theology under his old friend Abbé Balley; but when the moment of his examination came, his memory became a blank, and he made such incoherent replies that the examiners summarily dismissed him. M. Balley went at once to the Superior of the Seminary and entreated him to come the next day, with the Vicar-General, and examine his pupil in private. The result was most

satisfactory, and he was at once admitted to the Great Seminary of St. Irenæus to prepare for Holy Orders.

When the time for his ordination drew near, however, the same difficulty arose. Jean Marie, in spite of his humility, sweetness and piety, which had won the esteem of all, was sadly deficient in the learning usually required for candidates for the priesthood. Again Abbé Balley sought an interview with the Vicar-General, M. Courbon, who administered the diocese in the absence of the Archbishop, Cardinal Fesch, and who was remarkable for his discernment of character. On hearing from all his superiors that whatever might be his deficiences in learning, he was a model of piety, he at once exclaimed, "That is enough. I will receive him—Divine Grace will do the rest." He was accordingly ordained sub-deacon at Lyons by the Bishop of Grenoble, deacon the July following, and six months after was ordained priest at the same place. This was on the 9th of August, 1815, he being then twenty-nine years of age.

His first appointment was as curate to his old friend and master M. Balley, with whom he remained for two years till the death of this venerable priest, of whom M. Vianney wrote: "He died like a saint as he was; and his pure soul departed to add new joy to Paradise." The people of Ecully tried hard to obtain M. Vianney as his successor but he steadily refused, alleging his own unworthiness. Three months later he was appointed Curé of Ars, a little village in the Department of Trévoux.

The peasants in this place were in a state of the utmost ignorance and spiritual poverty. How was their new pastor to win their hearts and bring them to a better state of mind? He had but two weapons: one, incessant prayer; the other, the fervent preaching of the word of God. To this he added the tenderest charity; so that each one of his flock felt he was loved and cared for. His great desire was to establish in his church the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: but where was he to find adorers? At last he found a few faithful souls who were willing to join him. First, the lady who lived in the Castle or big

house of the place, Mlle. d'Ars, whose time was divided between prayer and the care of the poor and sick. Then a simple peasant joined them, who, whether going to his work or returning from it, never failed to go into the church and adore his Lord. M. Vianney once asked him what he said when he knelt before the Tabernacle. "I say nothing," the old man replied; "but I look at Him and He looks at me!" Then there came a poor widow named Bibot, and a Mde. Pignaut, who had come from Lyons to be under M. Vianney's pastoral care. Thus a little group was formed, who began the day with holy Mass and ended it with night prayers and the rosary said in common. Very soon, other members of the congregation followed the good example; and to the joy of the good Curé, all the village came at last, after their day's work, for half-an-hour's prayer before going to bed.

To encourage them in more frequent Communion, to stop Sunday labour, and to induce the young girls in the parish to join in a Confraternity of the Rosary, were the next objects of his zeal; in all of which he was eminently successful. Then came the decoration of the neglected parish church, in which he was greatly assisted by the Viscomte d'Ars, who sent him a splendid tabernacle, candlesticks and reliquaries for his new altar. To show his joy and gratitude, he and all his flock made a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Fourvières at Lyons. Then he built various small chapels: one dedicated to St. John the Baptist, his patron; the next to St. Philomena, his "dear little Saint," as he called her, who obtained everything by her prayers, and to whom he attributed all the graces and wonders which were done at Ars.

After five years in this parish, M. Vianney was appointed to the parish of Salles, an important place in the Beaujolais. He did not refuse to go, but still most earnestly wished to remain in his obscure village. Thrice he packed his poor furniture for departure, and thrice the inundation of the Saône rendered it impossible. In the meantime his flock redoubled their prayers and remonstrances to the Bishop and the Vicar-General, and at last

they were persuaded to cancel the appointment and leave the beloved Curé in peace.

From that time till his death, M. Vianney never left his parish save to assist neighbouring priests occasionally in giving missions and retreats. In one that he gave at Trevoux in 1823, the number of conversions was so great that he was beset with similiar applications; but he accepted such work only when he could do so without neglecting his beloved parishioners at Ars. In 1825 he began an important work in his parish, which was the founding of an asylum for orphan and destitute girls, which he called "La Providence." To purchase a house for this purpose he sold all he had in the world and anticipated all he received from his living. He placed it under the care of two very pious women whom he had himself trained in obedience, humility, simplicity and absolute dependence upon God—Benôite Lardet and Catherine Lassagne. They began in the utmost poverty, without even bread, but, trusting in Divine Providence, their wants were, one by one, supplied. Soon the number of the orphans increased to such a degree that the house had to be enlarged. The Curé became at once architect, mason, and carpenter—he made the mortar, cut the stones and carried them with his own hands—so that fired with a like zeal, the whole parish came to help in the work. Over and over again, food was miraculously multiplied in answer to his prayers; his granary was filled with corn and his cellar with wine; while money poured in from the most unexpected quarters and always at the moment of his greatest need. The type upon which he had founded his Home was rather that of a poor and pious family than of a charitable institution. It embraced none of the modern systems of learning; but the girls were taught to write and sum, besides needlework and knitting, the rest of the time being filled up by household duties. The Curé gave them catechetical instruction every day himself, speaking to them of the chief truths of faith and, above all, of the fear and love of God. These little instructions have been collected by his old friend, the Abbé Monnin, and are models of beautiful and touching

teaching on the Sacraments, on the practice of certain special virtues, and the sweetness of the Real Presence.

We have said nothing yet of the heroic life of the Curé d'Ars. There are few even among the Saints whose daily lives bear the mark of a more systematic and unflinching crucifixion of the whole man, a more uniform practice of both exterior and interior mortification, than we find in the portrait traced of him by those most familiar with the details of his really supernatural existence. His ordinary food consisted of some pieces of black bread, or some potatoes which he boiled for himself once a week. In vain did his pious housekeeper or any friend make him some little delicacy. It went instantly to the poor and sick. He had at first a straw palliasse on his bed, but finding that too luxurious, he slept latterly on the floor with a stone for his pillow. His whole day, with very short exceptions, was spent in the Church and he rarely allowed himself more than two or three hours' sleep. When his confessional became so crowded that from midnight the people were waiting for their turn, he reduced the already small amount of rest allowed his worn-out body. As to his clothes, though particular as to cleanliness, he never would have but one cassock, which he wore till it was in rags. His hat was shapeless and his boots were guiltless of blacking. Yet in this guise he would attend ecclesiastical conferences and other clerical meetings, and in answer to the raillery of his companions would reply: "What I have got on is quite good enough for the Curé d'Ars," thus adding humiliation to mortification.

The sufferings inflicted on him by the devil were added to those which he so mercilessly waged upon his poor body and for years interrupted the little sleep which he had allowed himself. His biographer states that this persecution went on, with more or less violence, for a period of thirty years. Not only were horrible noises heard, which alarmed everyone who came to the house, but terrible doubts of his salvation, fears of hell and other spiritual conflicts, were added to his physical tortures. Yet what must have been the courage which could hold out, night after night, against this continual, sensible pressure of the powers of evil, and return to his daily

labour for souls with a brow so unruffled and a voice as calm and soothing as if none but ministering angels had been suffered to come near his bed! His brother priests often laughed at him for these "hallucinations," as they called them; and some went so far as to treat him as a visionary and a maniac. One evening, when he was giving a retreat at St. Trivier-sur-Moignans, this raillery took a bitter tone. "Your presbytery," they said, "is nothing better than an old barn; the rats are quite at home there, and you take them for devils!" The holy Curé said nothing, but retired to his room, rejoicing in his humiliation. That very night, however, the scoffers were rudely awakened by a fearful noise. The presbytery seemed upside down, the walls shook as if with an earthquake, while fearful cracks seemed to threaten to bring down the whole house. Everyone rushed out of bed and to the Curé's room, whom they found peacefully resting. "Get up," they cried; "the presbytery is falling!" "O no," he replied; "I know very well what it is. Go back to your beds. There is nothing to fear." They never after this jested at his nightly disturbances!

These violent noises almost always coincided with some wonderful manifestation of Divine Grace in the conversion of noted sinners: so that the holy Curé accepted the trial patiently for their sakes. One day, when there was a great celebration of the Forty Hours' Adoration at Ars, a tremendous smell of burning pervaded the place, and it was found that the poor bed and all the furniture of the Curé's room were burnt, including the few poor holy pictures round his bed; yet the floor remained unscathed, though being old wood, it would have caught fire instantly had the conflagration been a natural one. The Curé, as it happened, had been all night in adoration. When told of the event he said, laughing: "As he could not burn the man, he has consoled himself by burning his bed! To-day I think I am the poorest man in the parish. They all have beds and now, thank God! I have none." Somebody having begun to pity him, he answered quickly: "O, there is less harm in this than in the slightest venial sin."

But it was not only the Evil Spirit who was permitted

thus to torment him. The Curé d'Ars would have wanted one essential mark of sanctity if this persecution had not been accompanied by the dislike and misrepresentations of even good men. He bore this trial for more than eight years; but he lived it down. A meeting had been held by the most influential clergy in the neighbourhood, who resolved to make a formal complaint to the new Bishop of Belley "of the imprudent zeal and mischievous enthusiasm of this ignorant and foolish Curé." Mgr. Devie sent his Vicar-General to Ars to enquire into the whole matter, who returned edified and delighted with all he had seen and heard. "I wish you, gentlemen, a little of that folly at which you scoff. It would do no harm to your supposed wisdom!" Such was the verdict of the good and holy Bishop after a most minute enquiry. Never during that terrible trial did word or look betray what M. Vianney suffered, or mar the serenity of his face. Believing himself to be deserving of all the blame cast upon him, he always expected to be ignominiously dismissed from his cure.

Yet he worked on just as hard and just as calmly. To a priest who one day came to complain of the wearisome and unjust persecution to which he was subjected, he replied: "My friend, do as I do—let them say all they have to say—then there will be no more to be said, and they will be silent." He practised to the letter the maxim so often on his lips: *The Saints never complain.* When asked how he could possibly, under the continual threatening of dismissal and amidst the wearing vexation of this strife of tongues, have preserved his energy and the self-command necessary to labour on with unabated ardour and perseverance, he replied: "We do much more for God when we do the same things without pleasure or satisfaction." To the jealousy and calumnies of the good were added the bitter enmity of the bad, who dared to accuse this man, an example of the most austere penance and modest gravity, of being a vile hypocrite and leading an evil and scandalous life. When some one was expressing his indignation at such imputations on his spotless purity, he answered: "I am sorry that God should be offended: but, on the other hand, I rejoice in all that

is said against me, because the condemnation of the world is the benediction of God. I was afraid of being a hypocrite when people were making some account of me; and I am very glad to see that unfounded high estimation of me turned into contempt."

Thus did his humility defeat every wile of the devil. It was at this very time that the concourse of pilgrims to Ars began to increase in so wonderful a manner. His great miracles and his great works (supported by abundant alms) date also from this period.

But this faithful disciple of His Divine Master was to drink the draught of his own chalice—that dereliction of soul which is the heaviest of all trials to one who loves God with his whole heart. The Abbé Baux, who was his confessor for many years, affirms that his soul was habitually subject to the bitterest desolation. Our Lord hid from him the immense good which He was working by his means. He honestly believed himself to be utterly useless and devoid of piety, understanding, knowledge, discernment, or virtue. "He was continually haunted," writes his great friend, Abbé Monnin, "by confusion for past faults and by fears of faults to come; and by the constant dread he had of doing ill on every occasion." "I have no resource against temptations to despair," he once said, "but to throw myself before the Tabernacle, like a little dog at his master's feet."

His intense appreciation of the sanctity required of the ministers of the sanctuary was another source of suffering. Speaking one day of the difficulty of corresponding with a true priest's vocation, he exclaimed: "Ah! to say Mass, one ought to be a seraph. If we really knew what Mass is, we should die! We shall never understand how blessed a thing it is to say Mass till we are in Heaven. How pitiable is the state of that priest who does this as an ordinary thing! There are some who have begun well and said Mass devoutly for some months; and afterwards. . . ." (Here his voice was choked with tears.) "O, when we consider what it is that our great God has intrusted to us, miserable creatures that we are! . . What does the mischief is, all

this worldly news, this conversation, these politics, these newspapers. We fill our heads with them: then we go and say our Mass or our Office. . . . We do not enter enough into ourselves: we do not know what we are doing. What we want is more reflection, more prayer, more union with God. O how unhappy is a priest who is not interior! . . One of our great misfortunes is that our souls become callous. At first we are deeply moved at the state of those who do not love God. At last we come to say: 'These people do their duty well: so much the better: these others keep away from the sacraments, so much the worse!' and we do nothing—neither more nor less—in consequence!"

"Ah!" he continued, "there is no one in this world so unhappy, very often, as a priest. In what does he pass his life? In beholding the good God offended; His Holy Name blasphemed; His commandments continually violated; His love continually outraged. The priest is like St. Peter in the pretorium of Pilate. He has always before his eyes his Lord insulted, despised, mocked, covered with ignominy. It is horrible. If only God were less good: but He is so good! What will be our shame when the day of judgment discovers to us our ingratitude! we shall then understand it; but it will be too late."

In spite of all these mental and bodily sufferings, however, there was no outward indication of the conflict within, so great was the strength and the patience with which he possessed his soul.

The pilgrimage to Ars, which for a period of thirty years seemed to bring back a scene from the days of St. Bernard to this unbelieving 19th century, began shortly after the foundation of the "Providence" Asylum. "Divine Providence," wrote M. Léon Aubineau, "so ordered it that men and women, enamoured of all kinds of vanities, should come in crowds to this out-of-the-way village to do homage to humility and simplicity. While the philosophers of our day are all inveighing against confession and its consequences, the people have replied by flocking to Ars to venerate a Confessor!"

Persons of the highest rank and most refined and luxu-

rious habits, were content to be ill-lodged, ill-fed, to rise at daylight or before, to be squeezed, elbowed, repulsed, braving cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue, want of sleep and all to catch a few words from the holy Curé. They would not have done as much for any king or queen of earth.

In 1835 it was found necessary to organize a regular system of public conveyances from Lyons to Ars, and of steamboats on the Saône. M. Vianney soon arrived at that state to which St. Philip Neri bound himself by vow—never to have an hour or a moment to himself. From that year he was dispensed by the Bishop from the usual pastoral retreat. "You have no need of a retreat," said the Bishop; "and there are souls at Ars which have urgent need of you." M. Monnin states that even in 1848 the number of pilgrims amounted to 80,000 in the course of the year, and they went on steadily increasing. They were admitted to his confessional each in his turn; but M. Vianney would sometimes call out of the crowd such as, by the supernatural light vouchsafed to him, he perceived to be in most urgent need of spiritual succour. No other claim of precedence was allowed.

It was this daily and unremitting labour for souls which constituted the real miracle of the life of M. Vianney, which was, in fact, passed in the confessional. Of the twenty-two hours he gave to labour, he reserved only time to say his Mass and Office and to snatch the semblance of a meal at mid-day. Two hours only were given to sleep. At one o'clock in the morning he was in his confessional in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist till six or seven o'clock, according to the season, when he left it to prepare to say Mass. So closely did the crowd press upon him that it was necessary to clear a passage for him whenever he stirred. After Mass, he blessed the various objects of piety which were presented to him, drank a little milk which had been brought to him in the sacristy, and then heard the confessions of forty or fifty men who had been waiting all night. At 10 o'clock he closed the sacristy-door and said his Office, kneeling on the floor without any support. When that had been done, he went to a little room under the belfry, where he confessed the sick

or those who could not wait any longer at Ars. At 11 o'clock he catechised. As he went down from the pulpit, the throng was thicker than ever. At 12, he went to his poor dinner, the people watching for him at every outlet from the house. At half-past twelve he went to the "Providence" on parish business or to visit the sick. Then he returned to the church, said vespers on his knees, and then went back to his confessional till night.

It might have been supposed that labours so incessant and absorbing would have prevented him from giving his full attention to each soul in particular. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There was not one of his penitents who might not have believed him or herself to be the object of his special solicitude. He had that great art and wisdom which enables a man to concentrate his whole mind on the present moment; so that amidst the overwhelming pressure of such a multitude of people, he listened to the penitent at his feet as if he had nothing else to do or to think of. Such for thirty years was the life of the Curé d'Ars. A man of the world wrote not long ago: "People speak of the miracles at Ars: but the greatest of all was the laborious and penitential life of M. Vianney. That a man could do what he did, and do it every day, without even growing weary or sinking under it, is what surpasses all human comprehension. This is to me the miracle of miracles."

In the beginning of May, 1843, however, he was seized with an illness which threatened to be his last. The concourse of pilgrims in May had been immense and at length even his giant strength gave way. He had previously been attacked by the fever which was so prevalent in the unhealthy atmosphere of the Dombes, and was ever afterwards subject to acute headaches which he bore with his accustomed calm and cheerfulness. But this time his health gave way so completely that the last Sacraments were administered to him, and the despair and desolation of his flock may be imagined. Then he begged that a Mass might be said for him at the altar of St. Philomena, when he fell into a peaceful slumber which was the precursor of his perfect recovery. He

attributed his cure entirely, under God, to the intercession of his "dear little saint," as he called her. A profound terror of the judgments of God, and an intense fear of death, characterized this first severe illness of the holy Curé; but when the hour of his departure really came, sixteen years later, there was no trace of this fear, which had then given place to the simple trustfulness of a little child sinking to rest in its mother's arms.

On his recovery, the Bishop insisted on his accepting a coadjutor, and appointed M. Raymond, the Curé of Savigneux, to assist him. But M. Vianney no sooner saw him installed than he thought he might now leave his work in better hands than his own, and that Divine Providence had thus interfered to set him free to follow the long-cherished wish of his heart—for perfect solitude: or, as he expressed it, "to weep over his own poor sins, so that God might perchance have mercy on him." He had run away once, three years before, one very dark night, when an interior voice called him back to Ars. Now, however, on the plea of health, he went back to his old home at Dardilly, on foot and by wayside paths lest he should be pursued and forcibly brought back.

The whole parish was in utter consternation. His flock followed him to Dardilly, so that he felt he must seek some other refuge. In the meanwhile, the Bishop positively forbade him to leave his diocese and begged him to go with M. Raymond and make a pilgrimage to the Chapel of Beaumont, an ancient sanctuary of our Lady. They went into the church to say their Office when they arrived; and on rising from their knees to go out, found, to their astonishment, that the whole church was filled. M. Raymond told him that he could not do less than say a few words to these poor people, on which the Curé began to speak to them on the Love of God, and his voice, which had been so weak since his illness, was restored to him so that he could be heard by the whole church. The next morning they both said Mass: and during his thanksgiving, M. Vianney, turning to his companion, said suddenly: "Let us return to Ars!"

His flock were overjoyed. The labourer left his work, the thresher threw down his flail, the women ran out of

their houses. At last a cry arose: "Here is our Saint!" and his children crowded round him, struggling which should be the first to get his blessing, to touch his cassock, to kiss his feet. He went straight to the church and said the evening prayers amid the joyful and grateful tears of the people. Like his Divine Master, the Curé d'Ars, having fled from the applause of men, returned to consummate his sacrifice.

Once more, however, was the temptation to escape to come upon him, for he always felt and said "that it was a fearful thing to pass from the cure of souls to the tribunal of God."

He had raised funds for the foundation of a society of missionaries, which was established at Pont d'Ain and which enabled missions to be preached in 90 parishes of the diocese. Mgr. Devie's greatest wish was to connect this House with Ars, so that the example of the holy Curé should be continually before the eyes of his young priests. This design was carried out by his successor, Mgr. Chalandon, who in 1853 appointed Abbé Toccanier, one of the missionaries at Pont d'Ain, to go to Ars and assist M. Vianney. Here was a favourable opportunity for the good Curé to put, as he expressed it, "a better man in his place." The serious illness of his brother gave him the pretext, and in spite of the efforts of his flock, he again set out in a carriage provided for the purpose. But he had scarcely started when he was seized with a most unusual feeling of fatigue. He got out of the carriage to get some fresh air, and tried to walk, but in vain. M. Toccanier, who was with him, offered to go on to his brother and replace him. M. Vianney accepted, and no sooner had he turned his horse's head towards Ars than all feelings of weakness and illness disappeared. He was met by the omnibus from Lyons, full of pilgrims, some of whom had not been to confession for forty years. "You see," said his friend, "that the good God stopped you Himself this time, to bring you back to the work so dear to Him—the saving of souls." M. Vianney smiled, but the lesson had not been lost upon him. He now understood that what he had fancied was an

inspiration was, in fact, a temptation; and never again strove to leave the path which God had so visibly pointed out to him.

The celebrity which became so keen a suffering to this humble and holy man of God, increased as time went on, and was the more extraordinary from the fact that it rested on his sanctity alone. One distinguished pilgrim exclaimed: "He is the very model of that child-like spirit which Jesus loved; and therefore it is that God is with him." Another, a celebrated poet, was so struck by his appearance that he involuntarily said out loud "I have never seen God so near." "True, my friend," instantly said M. Vianney, pointing to the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the Altar, "God is not far from us. We have Him there, in the sanctuary of His love."

Not only eminent laymen from all parts of the world flocked to his confessional, but Bishops and Princes of the Church. Among these was Mgr. Dupanloup, who came filled with fear on receiving the burden of the Episcopate. "There are many Bishops in the Calendar of Saints," replied M. Vianney, "but hardly any Curés. Judge, Monseigneur, whether you have as much cause to tremble as I!"

In May, 1854, the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Ullathorne, came, and has left a graphic account of the extraordinary impression the Curé produced upon him. He was speaking of prayer for England and of the sufferings of our poorer Catholics on account of their faith, while the Curé was listening, his eyes nearly closed; when, all of a sudden he opened them wide, and fixing them on the Bishop with extraordinary brilliancy, exclaimed in a tone of confident assurance: "I believe and am sure that the Church in England will return again to its ancient splendour!"

Père Lacordaire paid him a visit the previous year, and listened in silent reverence to the words and advice of the holy Curé. When M. Vianney heard who it was, he exclaimed: "That which is greatest in science is come to humble itself to what is least in ignorance; the two extremes have met." He had the greatest

dislike to having his portrait taken, and on one occasion, when a very holy painter came with a letter from the Bishop, to beg for a sitting, he replied: "Willingly—provided Monseigneur will permit me to leave the place directly afterwards!" The poor artist was compelled to catch the likeness by stealth, and that with great difficulty.

Among the marks of honour he received was the dignity of Canon, conferred upon him by Mgr. Chalandon, and the Cross of the Legion of Honour, sent to him by the Emperor. He never wore his Canon's dress except at the ceremony of his reception by the Chapter; and as to the Cross, all he said was: "I can't conceive what made the Emperor send me this, except for having been once a deserter!" He had opened the case containing it, supposing it was a relic or something for his church; and his look of blank disappointment was well remembered, as he said: "It's nothing but this, after all.'

We have said nothing of M. Vianney's personal appearance. He was rather short, and though not devoid of vigour, yet his whole frame indicated a highly nervous temperament. Up to the last, his hearing retained its acuteness, his sight its keenness, his mind its clearness, and his memory its freshness, and that up to the very day of his death. Yet his body had reached such a degree of extenuation as to seem almost transparent. His head fell slightly forward on his breast, from the habit of recollection and adoration. His hair fell thick and long like a white aureole round his head. On that emaciated face there was no token of aught earthly or human; it bore the impress of Divine grace alone. The eyes alone betokened life: they shone with an exceeding lustre. There was a kind of supernatural fire in M. Vianney's glance, which continually varied in intensity and expression. That glance dilated and sparkled when he spoke of the love of God, while the thought of sin veiled it with a mist of tears. It was by turns sweet and piercing, terrible and loving, child-like and profound. It was a very furnace of tenderness and compassion when fixed upon any one. It had that mysterious power of attraction bestowed by our Lord

upon those closely united to Himself: and, wonderful to say, that glance, which searched all hearts, never frightened any one. Without thinking or knowing of it this man, so weak in bodily presence, drew to himself all who came near him and within the sphere of his influence. Once to meet his eye, or hear his voice, was to be fascinated by him for ever. Men of the world have acknowledged that after they had seen the Curé d'Ars, his image seemed to haunt them, and his remembrance to follow them wherever they went, so vivid was the impression of his sanctity.

Next to his eyes, the most remarkable thing in the face of the Curé d'Ars was his profile, the lines of which were bold, harmonious and well defined. Although the sweetness and serenity of his face betokened the Divine peace which dwelt within him, yet its characteristic expression, when at rest, was a kind of supernatural sadness. But when he came forth from this habitual state of recollection to converse with men, it was a bright and gracious smile which was ever ready to respond to every look turned upon him. In fact, there was not one of his features which then did not seem to smile. In conversation he was gentle, cheerful and even playful. The spirit of God which dwelt within him gave to his lightest word an incomparable sweetness, fitness and simplicity. As people say of others now and then, "he always said the right thing in the right way." When Mgr. Chalandon came for his first visitation, he met him with the words:

"Monseigneur! the days on which your holy predecessor visited our parish were days of benediction, and no wonder, for where the saints pass God passes with them. We have lost nothing, Monseigneur: on the contrary, we have gained; for Mgr. Denie still blesses us from heaven; and you, whom he chose to carry on his work, you bless us on earth. Bless us, Monseigneur, bless the pastor, bless the flock, that we may always, and all together, dearly love our good God."

To Mgr. Langalerie who said to him: "My good Curé, will you kindly permit me to say Mass in your Church?" he at once replied: "Monseigneur, I am only sorry that it is not Christmas, that you might say three."

At the end of the long procession on Corpus Christi, one of his friends wanted him to take some food. He refused, saying: "I do not need it. How should I be tired? I have been bearing Him Who bears me."

A religious once said to him, with great simplicity: "Father, people believe generally that you are very ignorant." "They are quite right, my child," he replied; "but it does not matter. I can teach you more than you will practise." We might multiply such speeches were we not afraid of exceeding the space allotted to us.

It is a difficult task to preserve perfect tranquillity amidst incessant activity: recollection amidst the most absorbing exterior labours: entire sweetness and self-possession and constant union with God in the midst of hurry, noise and an undue pressure of work. But the Curé d'Ars rose superior to this trial. At whatever moment he might be seen, surrounded, pressed, assailed by the indiscreet multitude: harassed by absurd and idle questions: tormented by impossible requests: called hither and thither: intercepted whichever way he turned: not knowing how or whom to answer first: he was always himself, never irritable or impatient, always gracious, always amiable, always compassionate, always ready to yield and grant everything to all with a sweet, calm and smiling countenance. It was impossible to detect a cloud on his brow, or the slightest shade of annoyance or discontent: still less did any one ever hear a word of reproach or complaint from his lips. Again, when, towards the last years of his life, he was surrounded by the most clamorous and unrestrained tokens of respect, confidence, admiration and veneration; applauded, followed, borne in triumph by the multitude; when he saw them haunting his steps, hanging on his words, kneeling for his blessing—still he was the same: simple, modest, humble, ingenuous as a child: never seeming for a moment to suspect that his own sanctity had anything whatever to do with this extraordinary concourse, or with the miracles celebrated by so many tongues.

Another remarkable feature in his sanctity was his extraordinary consistency. Most men have their good and bad days: their hour of weakness, irritability or

the like. With him it was otherwise. He was watched day and night, day after day, week after week, and he was never known or seen to act but in the most perfect manner. In all he did, he combined the utmost purity of intention with the greatest intensity of fervour, so that it was impossible for those about him to find an instance in which he might have done better what he had in hand. The tender and considerate kindness which was one of his striking characteristics sprang, in part, from his total self-forgetfulness. He who never sought for sympathy under the severest sufferings of mind or body, gave all he had to those around him, especially to the poor, the weak, the ignorant and the sinful. He was as sensitively careful of and anxious for the health of his missionaries as he was sternly regardless of his own. "On one of my first Sundays," writes M. Toccanier, "he remarked that I coughed at vespers. What was my astonishment to see him come in to me, after night prayers, through a violent storm, with his little lantern in his hand, and say: 'My dear friend, I fear you have a bad cough. Stay in bed to-morrow morning. I will say the first Mass in your place and catechise the children.'"

To buy for one a warm cloak, for another an umbrella, for a third some other material comfort, were daily proofs of this tender consideration for those about him which was carried into all the most insignificant details of daily life. He never sat down in the presence of others, nor allowed others to stand in his own. How could any one help loving a man who was himself so full of love? It was not by alms that he won all hearts, but by his loving tenderness and sympathy; by the active and heartfelt interest which he took in others. With the growth of his interior life, his solicitude for his neighbour seemed to develop day by day.

Of the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, we have given already sufficient examples in the holy Curé's life. During Mass he seemed actually to see our Lord, and when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the expression on his face was such that it riveted the attention of all who saw him. He had received the gift of

prayer in a super-eminent degree, together with a constant realization of the Presence of God. Yet he had not the smallest affectation or singularity in his devotions, and deprecated any posture in church which might attract attention.

"M. Vianney," wrote one of his biographers, "had but one thought—to love God and to make Him be loved by others. Always God's work—never the slightest admixture of his own. Never did he allow himself the most trifling relaxation and never an instant's respite." "It is impossible to conceive," wrote Catherine Lassagne, "how much M. le Curé had at heart the salvation of souls." He laboured and wept for them by day; he suffered for them by night. To satisfy his burning charity and unsatiable liberality, he would sell all he possessed, even to his clothes. "We should never repulse the poor," he would say. "If we cannot really give them anything, let us pray that some one else may be inspired to do so. People scold me and say: 'They will make a bad use of their money.' Let them make what use of it they will. They will have to answer for the use they make of your alms; but you will have to answer for not giving it if you can." Money, however, poured in to him from all quarters; and not only money but food and wine were miraculously supplied to him on several occasions. When he wanted to make a foundation, he would simply pray to our Lady, or one of the saints. "If this work be pleasing to thee, send me the means to carry it out," and his simple faith was invariably rewarded. The sum he received for the single work of the missions amounted to 200,000 francs: and this was only one of the many great works he was permitted to accomplish. To a priest, who was in despair for money to finish his church, he said: "My secret is very simple—it is only to *pray*, and when you have obtained what you have asked for, *to give everything and keep nothing*."

Of the austerity of his life we have already spoken, as also of the severity of his bodily sufferings. But he mortified himself in a hundred little ways besides. He would never smell a flower, never drink when parched

with thirst, never brush off a fly, never appear to be conscious of an unpleasant smell, never express disgust at any repulsive sight, never complain of anything whatever which affected him personally, never lean against anything when kneeling, and so on. He suffered terribly from cold; but would never take any means to preserve himself from it, and once, during a very severe winter, both his feet were frozen.

Love, humility, poverty, mortification—these were the links of the chain which carried this marvellous soul to Heaven. He would often say, "We have nothing of our own but our will, and a single act of renunciation of that is more pleasing to God than fasts or disciplines. Even in the world we may at all times find opportunities for this renunciation. We can deprive ourselves of a visit which would give us pleasure: we can perform some distasteful work of charity: we can go to rest a little later or get up a little earlier. Of two things to be done, we can choose that which is the least pleasant to us. *It is this which makes Saints.*"

"Who was your master in theology?" was once ironically asked of the Curé d'Ars. "I had the same master as St. Peter," he replied with the utmost simplicity. His faith, in fact, was the only source of his science—his only book, our Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke without any other preparation than his habitual recollection in God and with that perfect self-possession which arose from entire forgetfulness of self. He thought only of the souls before him, and made them think only of God. This stood him in stead of any great talent or rhetoric, and gave to the simplest words he uttered a singular power and an irresistible authority. "It was his whole being that preached," wrote the Abbé Monnin, "and the power and energy of his words struck home to his hearers even without the beauty of imagery which abounded in his sermons." "Those who only heard him in his catechetical instructions," writes M. Monnin, "only half knew his power. It was in his Sunday discourses that the apostle, the prophet, the saint, consumed with thirst for the salvation of souls, came forth in his full power and mastery."

In the words of Mgr. Denie, "the Curé d'Ars was

not learned, but he was specially enlightened by the Spirit of God;" and the extraordinary gift of illumination with which he was endowed shone forth pre-eminently in his direction of souls. His singular gift of discernment enabled him to give that counsel to every person who came to him which proved to be the most conducive to the perfection of each. One he would advise to enter a religious order: another to wait till some home duty had been discharged: he would advise a third to marry, a fourth to lead a single life in the world, and so on. With loving playfulness he would answer one girl who had been pouring out a long story which he knew by heart: "My child! in which month of the year do you talk least?" and as she bit her lips in silence, he added: "It must be the month of February, because it has three days less in it than any other!"

A parish priest came to him one day with a very complicated case upon which no one he had hitherto consulted had been able to throw any light. M. Vianney replied with one word, which threw so vivid and instantaneous a light on the subject that the priest was amazed and overjoyed. "Where did you study theology?" he exclaimed. M. Vianney pointed to his *prie-dieu.* So great was the estimation in which his judgment was held, that there was not a charity or religious congregation founded in France during his life which was not first submitted to him. In this way Mde. Eugénie Smet laid her plans before him when she was thinking of starting her congregation for the relief of the souls in Purgatory. She begged him to pray specially for this project on All Souls' Day. The holy Curé remained for some time with his head between his hands. Then he looked up and said with tears: "This is the work which God has been so long asking for." He then dictated a letter to her which began as follows: "The idea of founding an Order for the relief of the souls in Purgatory comes directly from the Heart of our Lord, Who will bless and prosper it."

The sketch of this holy man's life would be incomplete if we did not say a few words of the miracles which were operated in answer to his prayers. These will be, of

course, submitted to official investigation during the process of his beatification: but they are attested by too many eye-witnesses to admit of any doubt. The first, in 1838, was the cure of one of the directresses of the "Providence" who had been entirely given up by the doctors and was, in fact, in her agony. The Curé prayed earnestly to St. Philomena and she was instantly restored to health and strength. A poor soldier had a crippled child and brought him to the Curé. "Be consoled," he said, "your child will be cured." And the words were hardly out of his mouth when the boy jumped up and began to walk. A similar cure occurred with another child, whose mother had travelled many miles to bring him to Ars, and who for 24 hours had hung upon his steps, holding up her boy with a gesture of such faith and entreaty that no one had the heart to drive her away. That evening the boy begged his mother to buy him some shoes as the Curé had told him he would walk the next day. Full of faith, the poor woman did so, and was rewarded by seeing her child run to the church, crying out: "I am cured! I am cured!" The mother only implored to be allowed to thank him. The Curé was inexorable. Later he was told that he must help her to thank St. Philomena, to whom he always attributed all his cures. Then he exclaimed in a tone of mortification: "St. Philomena really ought to have cured this little thing at home!"

Endless tales of the same kind are recorded; and still more wonderful were the miracles of grace of which he was the channel. This was emphatically his work, to which the bodily cures wrought at Ars were but secondary. A noted atheist was persuaded by a friend to accompany him to Ars. He went from pure curiosity, believing in nothing. As the Curé passed out of the sacristy to say his Mass, his eye fell on this man. It was but a glance, but it pierced his soul. He remained motionless during the Mass; but when the Curé passed again, an invisible force seemed to drag him to follow the priest. The door was closed, and all the man could say was: "I have a crushing burden on my shoulders!" "I know it," replied the

Curé, "and you must get rid of it at once. Kneel down and tell me all your poor life, and our Lord will take up your burden, for He has said: 'Come unto Me, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.'" The man did as he was bid, and opened his whole heart to the good Curé, who comforted and cheered him, so that he left the sacristy full of faith and hope and joy; neither did any doubts ever after destroy his peace.

But a volume might be filled with the like conversions, which continued up to the very time of his death; for at last the hour came when this faithful servant was called to his reward. The intense heat of the month of July, 1859, had tried him very much, as the church was positively suffocating from the great crowd which continually filled it. Several times he fainted away; yet the moment he recovered he went back to his confessional. On Wednesday, the 29th July, he went through his usual routine of labour, catechising, passing seventeen hours in the confessional and ending with night prayers. When he returned home he sank on a chair saying, "I can do no more." He went to bed; but at one o'clock in the morning when he tried to rise and go as usual to the church, he fainted away. Some one came in and exclaimed: "You are ill, M. le Curé, shall I call some one?" "No, it is not worth while. I think it is my poor end." He had foreseen and foretold his approaching death, and did not speak of saying Mass, which was a bad sign. He would not, however, submit to the use of a fan, which he considered a luxury. "Leave me with my poor flies," he feebly said. "You are suffering very much," said one of the watchers. "We are going to invoke St. Philomena with all our might that she may cure you as she did before." "O, St. Philomena will not do so now," was his only reply.

The consternation was deep and general when M. Vianney's absence from the confessional was perceived. The missionaries and the Brothers of the Holy Family watched continually round his bed, while night and day his pillow was tended by his old and beloved friend, the Comte des Garets. Another of his parishioners took up his station on the roof of the presbytery, and under the

burning sun of August, during the whole time of his illness, continued watering the roof and walls, to keep up a refreshing coolness around him. On Tuesday evening M. Vianney asked for the Last Sacraments; silent tears flowed from his eyes when the bell announced the last visit of his Lord. A few hours later he wept once more, but they were tears of joy. They fell upon the cross of his bishop, Mgr. de Langalerie, who came, in breathless agitation, praying aloud as he forced his way through the kneeling crowd who intercepted his passage. He was but just in time. At two o'clock in the morning, without struggle or agony, Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney fell asleep in the Lord while the priest was pronouncing the words:—"Let the holy angels of God come forth to meet him, and conduct him to the city of the heavenly Jerusalem."

The Curé d'Ars gave up his holy soul to God in the arms of the faithful companions of his labours, the Abbés Toccannier and Monnin. That life of extraordinary self-sacrifice, devotion, prayer, charity, patience, humility, mortification, was over. He had fought the good fight: he had finished his course: he had received his Crown.

The emaciated body, seamed and scarred with the glorious stigmata of penance, lay on his poor pallet, arrayed by the hands of his beloved missionaries in the cotta and cassock which in life he never laid aside. One of the lower rooms of the Presbytery was hung with white drapery and flowers, and thither for two long days and nights came pilgrims from every part of France to weep and pray round him, who, for the first time, had no answering tears to give, but whose prayers, now tenfold mightier than before, were rising for them before the Throne of God. Notwithstanding the intense heat, not a trace of decomposition appeared upon the body up to the time of the funeral. The venerable face lay uncovered, sweet and calm, as if in a quiet sleep.

On Saturday the funeral procession was formed. From early dawn dense masses of people had been collecting in and near the village till six or seven thousand were gathered together. More than three hundred

priests and representatives of all the Religious Orders came to pay their last tribute of reverence to the departed saint.

The procession halted in the square before the church, and there the Bishop of Belley, in words which have echoed through many lands, told what had been the life and death of this good and faithful servant of God. "The apostolate of the saints," writes M. Monnin, "ends not with their earthly life. Their relics have a mission too. We hope that from his venerated tomb M. Vianney will carry on his work. Several instances of extraordinary graces and of bodily cures, wrought by his intercession, have already occurred. We may not forestall the judgment of Holy Church; but when it shall please Him to call this new star to shine in the firmament of His Church, it shall answer 'I am here.' It will be the hour of His Divine Power and many miracles will reveal it."

Many hearts have thrilled at the words of consolation which he spoke, bidding us "be assured" of the conversion of England. Pray for us then, O holy Confessor of Christ, by the slow martyrdom of your life-long toils for souls. Pray for our priests, that their labours may be multiplied and their numbers and strength be made equal to their labours. Pray for our unbaptized and neglected children, O Father of the orphan and the outcast. Pray for those, who, from no fault of theirs, have been brought up in heresy and schism, that their eyes may be opened and that they may see the light and the beauty of God's Church.

And let all of us do our utmost to forward the cause of the beatification of this holy and humble priest, so that our cold and listless lives, fired by his example, may catch some distant gleam of his burning love for souls, and be filled with the same ardent desire to devote all our words, thoughts and deeds to the glory and service of God.

St. Catharine of Siena.

(1347—1380.)

CHAPTER I.

HER BIRTH AND EARLY DAYS.

St. Catharine was born at Siena, a town in Italy not very far from Florence, in the year 1347. Her parents, Giacomo and Lapa Benincasa, were good people of the middle class, and her father, who was a dyer by trade, was noted for his piety. Catharine, and a twin sister who died in infancy, were the youngest of twenty-five children.

From a very early age the little Catharine gave tokens of future holiness; when she was but five years old, her love of the "Hail Mary" was so great, that she would kneel down on each step of the staircase, both on coming up and going down, to repeat it. Many times also her mother saw her, while fulfilling this pious practice, being lifted by the hands of angels, who would bear her quickly to the top of the steps. She was moreover so sweet and gracious that the neighbours surnamed her "Euphrosyne," a Greek name which means joy or delight, and her speech was so wise and winning that it sank deeply into the hearts of all who knew her.

When she was in her sixth year, Our Lord favoured her with a wonderful and beautiful vision. She was coming home one day from visiting her eldest and married sister, together with her little brother Stephen, who was a year or two older than

herself. Suddenly above the church of St. Dominic, she saw a magnificent throne, on which was seated Our Divinè Saviour, clad in pontifical robes, wearing a tiara, and having with him the blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and St. John the Evangelist. At this sight Catharine stopped short, dazed with the splendour before her, and gazing lovingly on her beloved Redeemer, beheld Him making the sign of the Cross over her, at the same time smiling on her with looks full of love. Rapt into ecstasy, the child forgot where she was, the public street, the passers by, and remained with uplifted eyes, motionless as a statue, till she was somewhat roughly recalled to herself by her brother Stephen. He had walked on, thinking that she was following him, when he suddenly became aware that she was no longer by his side. He turned round and beholding her standing in the middle of the street called out to her to make haste and rejoin him.

Finding she gave no heed, he walked back, and pulling her by the hand, asked why she did not come on. Awakened as from deep sleep, Catharine lowered her eyes and looked at him, "If thou didst but see what I see," she said, "thou wouldst not disturb me," and instantly raised her eyes again. But alas! the vision had disappeared: and the little maiden wept long and bitterly, fearing that by her fault she had lost that glorious sight.

From this moment Catharine was no longer a child, and an ardent love of God became the only motive of her actions.

She learned to know, without reading or any human help, the lives of the Saints and especially that of St. Dominic, and felt a burning desire to imitate their penances, prayers, and practices of virtue. She sought out lonely places, and there

scourged herself and watched and prayed. When she was about seven she determined to leave her father's house, and lead, as far as she could, a hermit's life. So one morning she took a loaf of bread and set out very early before the household was awake. She knew the way to her sister's house, so thither she bent her steps, but when she reached it instead of going in, she passed it by and went out at the gate of the City. No longer seeing any houses, she thought she had found a desert, and after walking a short distance came to a cave in a rock. Full of joy she entered and set herself to pray, but scarcely had she begun her prayer when she felt herself gently raised from the earth, as high as the roof of the cavern. In this state she remained till the afternoon, when an interior voice warned her that it was not yet time for her to leave home and that God had other things in store for her. She therefore set out on her way back, but feeling herself too weak to walk so far, she earnestly asked Our Lord to help her, and in one moment found herself close to her parents' house. She was received by them as if she had returned from visiting her sister, and the story of her attempt at a hermit's life remained unknown till she revealed it to her confessor.

Not long after this, Catharine, in whose heart the remembrance of the glorious vision we have narrated was ever present, and who from the time she had been allowed to gaze on the supreme beauty of her Saviour, had never ceased to hunger for a closer union with Him, made the vow of virginity. She presented her offering through the most pure hands of His Virgin Mother, and the sequel of her life will show how faithfully she kept it. From this time, too, dates an increase of austerites in her already so mortified life—she gave up eating

meat, and took more frequent disciplines. Moreover she felt in her heart, young as she still was, an ardent desire for the salvation of souls; and along with this desire sprang up a great devotion to those saints who had given themselves in a special way to an apostolic career. She learnt by revelation that St. Dominic founded his Order of Friar Preachers for this sublime end, and from this time therefore, she conceived a particular veneration for the Dominican order. When she saw any of the Friars passing her father's house, she would follow after them, and kiss, with love and reverence, the prints of their feet. She longed to be one of them, and to work with them for the souls of sinners: and the thought of disguising herself as a man in order to gain entrance among them even came into her head. This idea haunted her the more, as she knew that St. Euphrosyne, by whose name she had once been called, had adopted a similar device, and under the garb of a monk had passed many years in a monastery. But God, Who did not desire this of her, at length gave her to understand in prayer, that such was not His Will; and Catharine, ever obedient to the inward voice which spoke so clearly to her heart, turned from the thought, and waited in patience for whatever her Divine Spouse should show her in the future.

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CHAPTER II.

SHE CONSECRATES HERSELF TO GOD.

Catharine was but seven when she made her vow of virginity; and the next few years, till she reached the age of twelve, were spent quietly at home, in the

performance of her duties to her father and mother. Though her parents, particularly her father, could easily see that the virtues practised by their little daughter were of no common order, yet they had no suspicion of the promise she had made to God, and therefore now set about finding her a suitable establishment in life. Lapa, her mother, was especially keen on this point, and having once made up her mind that Catharine should be married, took what she considered the best means for obtaining a good match for her daughter. She ordered Catharine to take more care of her person, to adorn her hair, to wear feminine ornaments, and, in short, to try and render her appearance more attractive. The heart of the Spouse of Christ sunk at these unexpected requirements, and for some time she turned a deaf ear to all her mother's entreaties. But Lapa, not easily baffled when once she had resolved on anything, bethought herself of enlisting the help of her eldest daughter Bonaventura, of whom she knew Catharine was especially fond, and charged her to overcome her sister's repugnances. Bonaventura therefore seconded her mother's efforts, and at last Catharine, wearied by all their endeavours, and still more swayed by the very great affection she bore her sister, relaxed a little in her high purpose and agreed to bestow somewhat more time and pains than hitherto on her attire and adornment. Following on this compliance came a slight decrease of fervour in prayer, and a falling off in her love of meditation. True, she had never for one moment wavered in her fidelity to her heavenly Bridegroom, by letting any creature usurp His place in her heart; but God, jealous of the sanctity of His chosen Spouse, and angry no doubt with the authors of this attempt to withdraw her ever so little from Him, interposed,

and by a blow which fell hardly on the heart of Catharine, showed her at a glance the danger of the path she had entered upon. Her sister Bonaventura, though young and healthy, was struck down in the hey day of her life and strength, and died after a few days illness. More than this, it became known to Catharine that she was suffering grievously in Purgatory, and it scarcely needed this second blow to fill the heart of the saint with a deep and terrible anguish, for what she henceforth deemed a heinous transgression. In vain did her confessor assure her that no stain of mortal sin (if indeed of venial fault) had defiled her soul. Catharine for some time refused to be comforted. She kept herself in spirit at the feet of the Divine Master with St. Mary Magdalen, bewailing her infidelity to the Beloved of her heart. But she was not deserted in her hour of distress: one day, as with eyes heavy with weeping, she cast herself at the feet of her crucifix, and besought forgiveness with bitter lamentations, the voice of her heavenly Spouse came to her clear and distinct, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and Catharine arose, consoled and strengthened. It was not indeed to forget the past, for the remembrance of this time left in her heart matter for a life-long contrition. She took from this moment the glorious St. Mary Magdalen for her mother and mistress, and purposed henceforth to imitate her in her deeds of penance.

One would have thought that St. Catharine's parents would, by this, have seen the uselessness of their efforts to turn her thoughts to earthly things, but on the contrary, the death of their eldest daughter only made them all the more determined to find a husband for Catharine. This time they invoked the help not only of their near relations but

of all their kinsfolk, and the arch enemy did not fail to bring his aid to the attack. He worked upon her parents by suggestions, and upon the saint herself by apparitions and temptations. Catharine, however stood firm, and at last Lapa, ever ingenious, hit upon a new device. She called to her help one of the Dominican fathers, an intimate friend of the family, and besought him earnestly to try and induce Catharine to comply with her wishes. The friar promised to do what he could, and spoke to the young girl, but the result was widely different from what her parents desired. She was so firm in her holy purpose of wedding no mortal man, that the religious, struck to the heart by her heroic constancy, changed his cue, and far from seeking to unsettle her resolve, did but confirm her in it. "Daughter," he said, "being now persuaded that you have made your choice by the inspiration of God, I have no more to say, save that you have chosen the better part, and may Our Lord give you grace to follow it. My advice to you is to cut off your hair, thereby to show your parents how bootless are their hopes of marrying you."

Full of joy, Catharine hastened to follow this counsel, and soon the hair which had been to her an occasion, if not of sin, at least of backsliding, lay in its abundant masses before her. Then she put on her head a coif or veil and hurried back to her usual daily work. Lapa, however, was not long in descrying the change in her daughter's attire. Running hastily to her, she tore off the kerchief, when perceiving that Catharine's head was shorn of the long, fair hair, so long her pride and delight, she uttered a piteous cry. "Alas, my child! what hast thou done!" The maiden meanwhile, without answering a word, covered her head anew, but not before her

father and brothers and sisters, startled by the mother's cry, came hastening in. In their turn they heaped reproaches upon her, and declared that she should have no peace or rest till her hair grew again, when they would know how to make her agree to their wishes. In order to stop her continual prayer, which they looked upon and rightly, as the secret of her constancy, they agreed that she should no longer have a room to herself; moreover that the kitchen-maid should be sent away so that Catharine should be burdened with all the drudgery of the house, hoping that by this means an obstacle would be put to her increasing communion with God. But all these apparent hindrances to her devotion, served, by the mercy of God, but to fan its flame. Calm and unmoved, St. Catharine by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, set about building a cell in her heart to make up for that which had been taken from her. Here, she could retire at all times, whether alone or in the company of others, and here she could ever enjoy the presence of One whom she found always awaiting for her within its enclosure. Moreover she adopted the plan of looking upon her father as representing Our Lord Himself; on her mother as Our Blessed Lady, and on her brothers and other members of her family as the Apostles and Disciples of the Redeemer. She went about the house with these thoughts in her mind, and thus the humble abode became to her a very Paradise, and the sweet fragrance of heavenly things hovered over her daily work, bringing rest to her wearied limbs and unceasing refreshment to her soul.

Little by little too, her patient holiness began to take effect on the minds of those around her. Her father, especially, began to reflect seriously upon the line of conduct he was pursuing, and to entertain

doubts as to its lawfulness. A circumstance, moreover, which happened about this time made him enter still more into himself.

One day he chanced to go into the room of his son Stephen, which, empty most part of the day, had been chosen by Catharine as a retreat during the few minutes she sometimes still had at her disposal. On entering, Giacomo saw his daughter kneeling motionless in a corner of the apartment, and to his surprise, saw hovering over her head a dove of unsullied whiteness. At the noise made by his approach the beautiful bird flew out of the half-opened window, and the father in astonishment asked Catharine whence it came. "My father," replied the saint, "I saw no dove nor yet any other bird in this chamber." Wondering much, Giacomo withdrew, pondering deeply over what he had seen, though for the present he kept it as a secret locked up in his own heart.

By this, and the sight of Catharine's daily virtues, God was preparing the hearts of her relations for her entrance into the great and holy order of St. Dominic, which, as we shall see, was to be the next step in the life of His chosen spouse.

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CHAPTER III.

SHE ENTERS THE DOMINICAN ORDER.

One night, not long after the events just recorded, when Catharine was asleep she had a great and glorious vision. She saw before her several saints, founders of religious orders, and amongst others, St. Dominic, whom she recognised by the lily of dazzling

holy founders in his turn invited Catharine to join his order, but she without hesitation moved towards St. Dominic. Instantly the Saint stepped forward to meet her, and offered her the habit of the Sisters of his order, known as Sisters of Penance: "Take courage, dearest daughter," he said, "fear nothing, for thou shalt for certain receive and wear this habit." Overcome with joy, Catharine burst into tears and returned humble thanks to God and the holy patriarch. Being moreover filled with a new and dauntless courage, she that very day chose a moment when all the members of her family were gathered together, and informed them in words which could not be gainsaid, that she felt the time was come to tell them of the vow of virginity which she had made, and that she begged them henceforth never to speak of marriage to her, for her resolution of belonging to God alone was fixed and irrevocable. Struck by her unwonted attitude and the energy of her words, her parents and brothers and sisters attempted no reply, but burst into tears; and for some moments no sound was heard in the room save that of their weeping. Her father was the first to recover himself, and declared that henceforth neither he nor any other of the family would oppose her wishes, but that she should be free to follow the call of her heavenly Spouse. Catharine, whose heart was filled with unspeakable joy, in spite of the sighs and tears of those who surrounded her, immediately returned thanks, first to God for the mercy shown to her, and next to her parents, who had at this moment fulfilled the dearest wish of her heart by promising that she should no longer be hindered in her entire surrender of herself to the one object of her affections.

She instantly began planning out a life in

conformity with this grant of freedom: she spent long hours in prayer during the day; and even most part of her nights were passed in this holy exercise. She abstained entirely from meat, and from the minute portion of wine which hitherto she had been used to mingle with her water; her food consisted only of raw herbs, and little by little she brought herself to subsist without any nourishment whatsoever. She wore upon her delicate body a rough hair shirt, and when for reasons of cleanliness she cast this aside, it was but to gird herself with a chain of iron, so hard and terrible that it sunk deep into her flesh and seared it as if it were red-hot. Her poor mother watched all these fearful macerations with bitter grief, and one day, when St. Catharine was engaged in taking a cruel discipline and was literally covered with streams of blood flowing down to the ground, she entered her room. "Alas! alas! my daughter, what doest thou? Wilt thou kill thyself?" she exclaimed, and as if bereft of her senses, she began to run about the house, raving and uttering piercing cries till the neighbours came rushing in, appalled at the unusual sounds. When they entered the house, and saw with their own eyes both the affliction of the mother and the proofs of the austerities of Catharine, we are told that they knew not which to pity most, the heart-broken parent, or the innocent young girl, who, to expiate the sins of others had inflicted on herself such terrible and unheard of torments.

The next step that St. Catharine took was to try and get herself received as a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic, mindful of the promise made her by its holy Founder. Her mother after much persuasion, agreed to ask the Sisters to receive her among them, but at first met with very ill success.

The Sisters declared that Catharine was far too young, and also, that their ranks were wont to be filled only by widows of mature age and good fame, who were able to live alone and were capable of taking care of themselves. Lapa, nothing loth to have her daughter's plans upset, hastened home with the news, but failed none the less to deter Catharine from her endeavour. She was obliged to return anew to the nuns, though unluckily for our saint her demand again met with a decided refusal. It chanced however, that just at this time St. Catharine fell ill of small-pox, and Lapa, who loved her best of all her children, nursed her with the tenderest care and trembled at the fear of losing her. St. Catharine thought this a good opportunity for once more bringing forward her request. "Dearest mother," she said, "if you wish me to live, I beseech you to procure me the habit I have so long wished for, for you must know that if I do not obtain it, you will not keep me long either in that habit or any other." Terrified at these words, Lapa hastened back to the Sisters, who were somewhat touched at the mother's grief, and answered, "If thy daughter be not too fair, we will consent to receive her." "Come yourselves," Lapa answered, "you will be the better able to judge." So they followed her to the house where the maiden was lying on her sick bed, and on account of her disease they could not discern the beauty of her features. Moreover, they were so struck by the wisdom of her words and the ardour of her desires that they no longer demurred, but to Catharine's unbounded joy, at last agreed that as soon as she was cured they would receive her into their company. Then indeed, she speedily began to pray for the recovery of her health, which up till then she had had little care for, and Our Lord seeing

her longing desires to dedicate her life to His service, was not slow in granting her request. She was scarcely cured when, accompanied by her mother and other relations, she presented herself at the Church of the Dominican Fathers, and there in the presence of about a hundred sisters of the Third Order, was clothed with the holy habit of Penance. Some may perchance be tempted to wonder why St. Catharine did not go a step further if she were bent on becoming a nun, and enter one of the many enclosed monasteries of her native city, instead of remaining under her father's roof. But the answer to this is easy: God had raised up the saint to do the work of an apostle, and for labour which enclosure would have rendered impossible. She was therefore, we must believe, providentially guided to embrace a life, which,while it left her free to come and go as the spirit of God should direct, would at the same time confer on her a religious character, and give more weight and authority to her words and deeds.

It would not, however, appear that St. Catharine herself was in any way conscious at this time of her after destiny; her one idea was to become a perfect religious, and to imbue her mind with the spirit of the Dominican Order. "Behold, thou art become a nun," she would say to herself, "beware lest thou continue to live as thou hast hitherto done, but with thy garments, change also thy way of life and customs." And she devoted herself more ardently than ever to prayer and penance. She never left her narrow cell except to go to church, and her silence was so rigorous that for three whole years she never spoke unless it were in confession. The three great characteristics of the Order of Friar Preachers imprinted themselves indelibly on her soul during

the years which followed her entrance into it, for, to her practices of prayer and penance, she joined the most burning desire for the salvation of souls, thus proving herself a worthy daughter and fervent disciple of St. Dominic, who left as a heritage to his spiritual sons, contemplation, mortification, and the apostolic life. During this time also which her after life shows to be one of preparation, she had long and terrible combats to endure against the spirit of darkness. He assailed her with every form of temptation, and assulted the spouse of Christ with the foulest sights and imaginations; but the only outcome of his impotent malice was to ground her still more firmly in heroic virtue and to win for her the choicest favours of her Lord. Once, after one of the most terrible combats she had had to undergo, Our Divine Saviour appeared to her as if hanging on the Cross, and consoled her with most sweet and loving words. Emboldened by His condescension, St. Catharine ventured to ask Him, "Lord where wert Thou when my heart was so troubled with these loathsome temptations?" "My daughter," replied her most gracious Saviour, "I was in thy heart." And soon after the vision vanished, leaving a heavenly joy lingering for many days in her soul. Nor was this favour the greatest of those bestowed on her in reward for her constancy, and for the humility which had rendered her proof against all the darts of the enemy. After many other celestial visitations, too long to dwell on in this short sketch, her Lord granted her one of the highest favours He has ever vouchsafed to give to any of His saints. One day, just before Lent, He showed Himself to her and after conversing with her for some moments, was joined by Our Blessed Lady and the Beloved Disciple, with St. Paul and St. Dominic. Lastly came the royal

psalmist, King David, bearing his harp, on which he began to play tunes of unearthly sweetness. Then the most Holy Mother of God advanced towards Catharine, and taking her by the hand, led her to her Divine Son, and begged Him to condescend to espouse her to Himself. He consented by bowing His head, and taking out a ring set with four precious pearls with a marvellously rich diamond in the centre, put it on the finger of her right hand, saying these words: "Behold I here espouse thee to Myself in faith, which shall endure in thee from this time forward, evermore, without change or shadow, until the time when thou shalt celebrate with Me in heaven the eternal nuptials. Wherefore, from henceforth, take courage and be not dismayed, but do whatever thou art told, for now that thou art armed with an invisible strength, thou wilt be able to withstand and overcome all thy enemies." Then the vision disappeared, but the mystic ring remained on the finger of Catharine, though visible to herself only.

Thus was the spouse of Christ made ready to begin the work to which she was destined. Clothed in the habit of the Dominican order, her virtue tried and made perfect in infirmity, and finally loaded with celestial favours by Our Lord Jesus Christ, she was now to appear before the eyes of men, and to take part in the active work for souls in which she had hitherto only concurred by her prayers and penances. The next chapter will show how, little by little, this was brought about.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF HER ACTIVE LIFE.

The first interruption in St. Catharine's hitherto solitary and secluded life came from our Lord Himself. One day after she had been long engaged in prayer, He told her that she was to go down and join the family at dinner, and that she should after that be again free to return to Him. St. Catharine was thunderstruck at this announcement, and at first besought Our Lord to let her stay with Him, pleading her inability to eat. But Our Lord stood firm and told her that she was now about to put in practice the precept of loving her neighbour for the sake of God, that she had always sighed and prayed for the salvation of souls, and that leaving her wonted solitude was the first step to more active work in their behalf. St. Catharine then hastened to obey, and though the prospect of again mixing in intercourse with others was by no means pleasing to her, took her place at the family repast. This first step was followed by fresh exertions and weanings from her hermitical way of life, and she began anew to perform many household works, such as sweeping, washing, and cooking. But this outward change made none in her heart; whenever she could, she flew back to her cell, and all day long her remembrance of the presence of God in her soul was so unbroken that she kept up the most intimate communication with Him despite all external employments.

Her accustomed ecstasies, far from being suspended were more frequent and wonderful than ever, and became more apparent to others. When

her mother, Lapa, saw her for the first time in a trance, she was so alarmed at the stiffness and contraction of her limbs, that she ran to her and pulling her violently by her neck, which was somewhat awry, tried to straighten it by force. Happily, however, a bystander, seeing the danger of what she was doing, uttered a cry, and Lapa gave over her well-meant but injudicious endeavours. When St. Catharine shortly after returned to herself, she felt as if her neck had been all but broken, and declared to Brother Raymund, her ghostly father, that if her mother had continued her efforts any longer, she would certainly have caused her death.

Another day, when St. Catharine was preparing the family supper, she sat down by the hearth to turn the spit, but little by little her arm ceased to move, and soon fell helplessly by her side, while her soul was ravished in heavenly contemplation. Lisa, her sister-in-law, saw what was the matter, and quietly took her place, leaving her to the enjoyment of celestial favours. When the meat was roasted, Lisa placed it on the table, and, after serving the others took her own repast, Catharine meanwhile being absorbed in ecstasy. The meal having come to an end, the family dispersed and Lisa, seeing it was useless to wait for her, went away to see after her children and husband. After a long absence she went back to the kitchen to see if Catharine had yet come to her senses, but what was her dismay to see the saint lying motionless on the hot burning coals. Screaming as loudly as she could, "Alas, alas, Catharine is burnt," she rushed to her and caught her up as quickly as she could. Her alarm, however, was changed to wonder when she could discover neither on her person nor on her clothes any traces of fire. Her garments were not

even singed, though the fire that day had been fiercer than usual, nor was there any smell of burning. The fire of God's holy love which burnt in her heart had prevented the outward flames having any effect on her bodily frame.

This was not St. Catharine's only escape from fire at this period. Once when she was praying in the Church of St. Dominic, being again rapt in ecstasy, she leaned her head against a pillar on which there stood a wax candle. By some chance the lighted candle fell down upon her head, and there it remained burning till it was all wasted away, and yet did no harm to the saint, nor even to the veil or wimple with which she was covered. Twice, too, she was thrown by the fiend himself into the fire; the second time he dashed her with such force into a pan of burning coals, that the pan, which was of earthenware, was completely smashed. But St. Catharine, who was not in the least hurt or daunted, got quickly up and said merrily to a woman who was standing by: "See what work Malatasca (for so she called the demon) maketh here."

Having now once more resumed her place in her own family, St. Catharine's next step was to undertake more active works in favour of the poor and sick of the neighbourhood. Possessing nothing of her own, she craved her father's leave to give away food and money, and obtained from him a large and hearty consent. Before all his household, "Let no one," he said, "hinder my beloved daughter in the distribution of alms; I give her full control over all that is in the house." It need scarcely be said that St. Catharine took full advantage of this permission, and gave away whatever she could lay her hands on so lavishly, that murmurs began to arise in the family. One day especially, all were much dis-

turbed when it was discovered that a large barrel of wine which they had hoped would last for a long time, was found empty. In fact the discontent was so loudly expressed that Giacomo was much distressed. Catharine, however, asking him the cause of his trouble, bade him fear nothing, and going to the cask and there kneeling down, besought Our Lord not to allow the alms she had given to the poor to become a cause of dissension in the family. She then made the sign of the cross over the barrel, and the wine began to flow again in abundance. On numerous other occasions also did God come to the help of His faithful servant. Once when she was confined to bed by sickness, she learnt that a poor widow in the city was dying of hunger, as well as her two children. Touched with pity, Catharine implored Our Lord to give her strength enough to come to their rescue. She then rose though it was not yet dawn, and loaded herself with every species of provision. As soon as the bell, before whose chiming none might stir out, sounded, she set forth on her errand of charity, and had nearly reached the poor woman's abode when her burden, which had hitherto seemed quite light, became so heavy that she felt as if she could not take another step. Again she turned to God with humble trust in His mercy, and entreated Him to enable her to fulfil her charitable task; and being once more strengthened, she reached the house, and finding the door open, went softly in and put down her load. She was turning homewards when for the second time all her strength forsook her, and seeing that it was the will of her Divine spouse thus, as it were, to sport with her she spoke to Him with a mixture of familiarity and reverence: "O my sweet Saviour, why makest Thou game of me in this manner—the day cometh

on, and dost Thou wish that all the world should see my folly? Grant me, I beseech Thee, strength to go home again." Then she tried to walk along but found herself barely able to creep; the widow too, who had been awakened by the noise, came down into the street and there recognised her benefactress. At last, however, Our Lord heard the prayer of St. Catharine, and she was enabled to reach home before the broad daylight came on.

Twice, Our Lord Himself appeared to her in the form of a beggar, and asked alms from her hand, and both times He came to her during the following night, commending her for her charity and promising her eternal gifts in exchange; in fact it would be impossible in this short life to enumerate all the wonderful events which now became almost of daily occurrence in the history of our Saint. We must however, say a few words of the heroic patience and charity she displayed in nursing the sick and dying, and choose one or two examples among the many recorded of this period of her life.

In one of the poorest hospitals of Siena, there was a woman called Tecca, covered with a leprosy so hideous that everyone fled from her, and the authorities were on the point of sending her to a leper house situated outside the city. But Catharine heard of this and flew to the succour of the unfortunate woman. She offered herself to serve her, and obtained leave for her to remain in the hospital. Twice every day she visited her, and performed all the most menial offices for her with as much care and reverence as if the poor sufferer were her own mother. But all this charity was far from meeting with a fitting return. The sick woman soon began to look upon Catharine's services as a right, and her exactions knew no bounds; moreover, when things

were not done to her taste, she would chide and revile the saint in the coarsest language.

This state of things lasted long, for nothing could shake the constancy or slacken the charity of Catharine. But there was one who was watching both the ungrateful conduct of the wretched woman and the unheard of patience of her saintly attendant, and Lapa, for it was she, could at last contain herself no longer. She peremptorily bade her daughter give over her care of the sick person, telling her that she would herself become a leper if she went on with her thankless task. Catharine however managed to appease her mother and to win her consent to her continuing her acts of charity. But the event proved that Lapa's fear was well-grounded, for soon the holy hands of the Saint became infected with the leprosy, and it was not until after the death of the sick woman that she was cured from the loathsome disease. God, wishing no doubt, to show how precious were her works of charity in His sight, permitted that after washing and laying out the dead woman, and finally placing the body in the grave with her own hands, the scales of leprosy should miraculously fall off them and leave them fairer and clearer than any other part of her person.

In 1374 Siena was visited by the plague, which lasted the first time for four months and then after a short interval returned again. Catharine was the angel of the sick and dying, and several marvellous cures were the outcome of her prayers and labours. She also about this time assisted several criminals in their last moments. Once while in ecstasy she obtained the grace of contrition for two hardened sinners who were being led to execution; and another time she accompanied a condemned man

to the scaffold, when she herself received his head on her knees after it had been cut off, and was then shown by God, the soul of the purified sinner admitted to eternal happiness. Her power over the demons was wonderfully manifested about this period, and she several times delivered the possessed from their tyranny. The gift of prophecy was also bestowed upon her, as well as a marvellous insight into the state of souls.

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CHAPTER V.

SHE WORKS FOR THE PEACE OF ITALY.

The century in which St. Catharine lived was for Italy fraught with intestine struggles, strifes, and even fierce warfare between the cities of the peninsula. Siena did not go scathless, and while as we saw in the last chapter the saint was carrying on her mission of charity, a terrible revolution had broken out within its walls. A form of popular government called of the "Twelve" was at the head of affairs and nourished a deadly hate against the nobles. These last, with the powerful lords Salimbeni and Tolomei at their head, were plotting secretly to overturn a detested authority. The work of bringing about a reconciliation between these two factions was reserved to the humble daughter of Benincasa. The task was by no means an easy one; belonging by her birth to the people, but having gained the sympathy of the nobility by her charitable services to many of their number, she was properly speaking of no party, her mission being only to save souls, to restore

peace in families, and to procure the happiness of her dearly loved native city. What were her weapons for all this? None save her prayers, tears, and penance in secret; and in public, her words, gentle without excluding firmness, and always ringing with the impress of tender charity towards her neighbour. One of her first triumphs was the reconciliation of the Maconi with the Tolomei and Rinaldini, three families of the Sienese nobility. A member of the house of the Maconi, who afterwards became one of her most faithful disciples relates the story himself, and says how after the saint had been begged to try and bring about peace, she went into an ecstasy during which members of the three rival families entered unknown to each other into the church where she was praying, and were so struck by seeing rays of Divine light escaping from her countenance that they felt all their resentments vanish. As soon as Catharine came to herself they commissioned her to settle the conditions of peace, and all faithfully abode her decision.

No less miraculous was the conversion of Nanni, a man rich and powerful, but stained with murder, and numerous other crimes. After many entreaties he consented to speak to the saint and after a short interview with her, he burst into tears and falling on his knees exclaimed, "I am conquered; holy virgin, I will do whatever thou desirest, only take care of my soul and snatch it from the hands of Satan." Catharine who had again been rapt in ecstacy, now recovering her bodily senses, gently encouraged the penitent man, but ordered him to do penance lest misfortune should overtake him. Nanni obeyed and made a contrite confession. A few days after, however, a great danger threatened

him, he was thrown into prison by order of the magistrates and the rumour spread abroad that he had been beheaded. But St. Catharine knew better and reassured her confessor, Blessed Raymund, who had brought her the news. "Do not fear," she said, "God has already mercifully changed his eternal sufferings into passing ones, and after having delivered him from hell, He will not fail to draw him out of this present danger." The event justified her prophecy, and later on, Nanni gave to his benefactress a magnificent villa which he possessed near Siena, and which was eventually changed into a monastery.

These conversions and many other reconciliations increased St. Catharine's reputation for sanctity and soon she was consulted on all sides by the parties in power. She spoke to all with courageous simplicity, exhorting them to learn to govern themselves in the first place, and then to unite in procuring justice and peace for the rest of their fellow citizens. In short she was for her native place a very angel of peace and good counsel, and her influence was felt among all ranks. Happy indeed would it have been for her compatriots if they had always as closely followed her advice, as they did on some occasions, for she who was now to set about a much greater enterprise would surely have been capable of restoring complete and lasting peace to the city, had all her desires been faithfully carried out.

The course of our story now at length leads us to the affairs of the Church itself, for whose special aid St. Catharine had doubtless been marked out by God from the first. There had been existing in Italy for a long time an under current secretly at work against the Holy See. The Pope, residing

himself at Avignon, had appointed legates as rulers of the Pontifical States, or to represent him in the various republics of the peninsula. These were for the most part foreigners, and as such universally hated. The plague of 1374, had been followed by a terrible famine in Tuscany, and on account of some difficulty in procuring corn from the Papal States for the use of the Florentines, the population, having at their head an ex-captain of the Pope's army, flew to arms and openly defied the authority of the then reigning Pontiff Gregory XI. A sharp struggle ensued; the populace profaned churches and monasteries, massacred priests, and in their fury flayed alive the Papal Nuncio, and actually buried him before life was extinct. Sixty strong places or fortresses belonging to the church moreover fell into the hands of the Florentines.

St. Catharine had watched the storm gathering from Pisa where she was at that time, and when it burst used every effort to keep Pisa, Lucca, and Siena within the bounds of duty. She, moreover, herself wrote two letters to the Holy Father imploring his indulgence, which letters exercised so salutary an influence on the mind of the Pontiff that he sent deputies to Florence bearing propositions of peace. Unhappily an act of treason on the part of the authorities put a stop to these negotiations, and soon affairs were worse than ever. Recognising at last, however, the necessity of submission, the Florentine rulers sent for Catharine and implored her to go herself to Avignon, there to try and make terms of peace. The saint at length consented, and set out for the Papal Court, where she was received by Pope Gregory with the greatest honour. It would be too long to go into all the details of what followed; suffice it to say that after

long and strenuous efforts, and being herself once nearly murdered by the Florentines to whose city she had returned during the course of the negotiations, she had the happiness of seeing peace restored between the reigning Pontiff and the inhabitants of the beautiful though rebellious Florence.

This work, great as it was, was not, as is probably well known to most of our readers, by any means the crowning achievement of St. Catharine. While at Avignon she had spoken to the Holy Father with the greatest openness and courage on the abuses of many kinds which she saw around her, both among pastors and people. More than this she had vehemently exhorted him to proclaim a new crusade against the infidels and had seconded the efforts which he made at her entreaty, with all her power. She wrote to many princes of Europe, and strove by words of burning eloquence to stir up in their hearts an ardour akin to her own and there was every appearance of her succeeding, when the premature, and, to human eyes, disastrous death of Gregory, put a stop to her efforts in this direction. The crusade did not take place, and the reforms she had worked for were delayed, but it was granted to her to see the fulfilment of the third of the great designs with which the love of Holy Church had inspired her. It was permitted to her after long and painful labours to be the means of restoring the Popes to Rome from their exile at Avignon. In 1377, after an absence of the Papal Court for 72 years, Gregory XI. made his solemn entry into his capital, and Rome, so long widowed, seemed delirious with joy at once more welcoming its Pontiff. But she who by her prayers and exhortations to Gregory had been the instrument of this great work was not on that day of public rejoicing to be seen amid the

exulting throng. From Genoa, where she had repaired to meet and encourage the Pope on his way to Rome, she had hastened back to her native place, there in the silence of her poor cell to pour out her ardent prayers for the welfare of Christ's church and for the guidance of His representative on earth. Fain would she have ended her days thus, but it was not long before, in the terrible calamities which again overtook the church, she was summoned by the Sovereign Pontiff to be his counsellor, and to prove herself the stay and pillar of Christendom in these moments of peril.

Urban VI. who had succeeded Gregory XI. on the throne was of harsh and unbending character; and the French cardinals, alienated by his severity, found a pretext for leaving Rome, and proceeding to Fondi in the kingdom of Naples, there elected an anti-pope, whom they proclaimed under the name of Clement VII.

This was the beginning of the great schism which for seventy years tore the robe of the mystic Bride of the Son of God, and at one time no less than three popes, two, of course, anti-popes, presented their claims to the eyes of the bewildered world. During the thick of these troubles Urban sent for Catharine to come to Rome, and yielding obedience the saint took up her abode in the Holy city. It were vain in these few pages to try and enumerate all the labours she undertook to bring back the erring to their allegiance to the one lawful successor of St. Peter. Firm in her adherence to Urban, her voice was ever raised in his defence. Once even, during a consistory the Pope sent for her, and ordered her to address the assembled cardinals. She spoke of the appalling evils caused by schism with such inspired truth and courage, that the

Pontiff at the end summed up her discourse, and declared that all present, including himself, had been brought to shame by the words of the intrepid virgin. "Our timidity is confounded by her courage," he exclaimed.

St. Catharine had not the happiness of living to see the conclusion of the troubles of the church, but she foretold their end before she died, and bade her disciples rejoice in the coming triumph of the cause of God. She continued to live on in Rome, where a spiritual family had gathered round her, and the details of her life there with its records of her states of supernatural prayer, of her miracles and of the divine favours showered upon her, are not among the least remarkable of her marvellous career.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE CLOSE OF HER LIFE.

Though the events which filled St. Catharine's life were so many and so wonderful, yet they were all crowded into a very short space of time, for she had but just completed her thirty-third year when she was called to her heavenly reward.

As has before been said, she led a life of wonderful union and close intercourse with God after she had taken up her abode within the walls of Rome, and one day in the ardour of her soul, she exclaimed, "O Sovereign Clemency, behold my body, I offer it up unto Thee as an anvil on which are to be bruised the sins of the wicked—I offer Thee my life, now, or whenever Thou pleasest."

Our Lord was pleased to take her at her word, and

for four months her body was as a target, receiving all the shafts of the Divine wrath. Once after having by her prayers and remonstrances with the rebels, quelled an insurrection against the Pope, our Lord said to her, "Leave this people to their fate, for my justice requires that I should no longer suffer their iniquities." Catharine nevertheless pleaded their cause so earnestly that they were spared, as formerly the ungrateful Israelites at the prayer of Moses, but not with impunity to herself. The powers of hell had leave to torment her virginal body and in their rabid fury, practised such cruelties upon her, that, according to the accounts of eye witnesses, it would be impossible, without having seen them, to form any idea of their intensity.

More like a phantom than a human being, parched with thirst, and yet unable to swallow a single drop of water; consumed by an interior fire which scorched her at every breath, St. Catharine never ceased from her wonted activity, nor to show on her face her habitual expression of heavenly joy. During Lent, after a most mysterious visitation from God, her sufferings increased to that degree, that her continuance in life was a daily miracle. No longer able to go out in the early morning, mass was said for her every day in the little chapel attached to her house, and by the express desire of Our Lord, she also communicated daily. After this, gathering up all her remaining strength, she would force herself to go to St. Peter's to pray for the Church, and it was while thus engaged that she there received the intimation of her approaching end.

During the Lent of this same year, or rather from the third Sunday of that holy season, for eight consecutive weeks she was so consumed by sufferings both interior and exterior, that during all that time

she was unable to lift her head. Lying stretched on planks she appeared to be already in her coffin; and it was only when Holy Communion was brought to her that her almost inanimate frame seemed to be re-inkindled with a breath of life. Once, when Brother Raymund was saying mass in her chamber, at the moment of Communion, St. Catharine, who had been lying perfectly motionless, suddenly arose, and to the stupefaction of the by-standers, walked unaided to the altar, and then knelt down to receive the Adorable Sacrament. After having communicated, she fell into the ecstasy customary with her on receiving the Body of Our Lord, and when that had ceased, she was found incapable of regaining her bed alone, so that her companions were obliged to carry her to it.

And now the end was close at hand—that death "precious in the sight of the Lord," of which, however, space will only allow us to say a few brief words. Besides the thought of the Church which never left her, St. Catharine's last days were filled with solicitude for her beloved spiritual family who, collected round their mother, were watching in deep sorrow the approach of her last moments. Prayer, obedience, charity to each other, and devotedness to the Church and Sovereign Pontiff, were the themes of her parting instructions to them. Especially did she dwell upon the last point, telling them at the same time that she considered being allowed to die for the Church, as she undoubtedly was doing, the greatest grace that had ever been bestowed upon her. On the Sunday before the Ascension she received Extreme Unction, and afterwards it seemed as if the demons were allowed for the last time to assault her. She was heard denying accusations, and sometimes she appeared to turn disdainfully

from an invisible speaker. After which, she repeated no less than sixty times, "I have sinned, Lord, have mercy on me." Before her were placed some relics with a cross in the middle, and fastening her eyes on the holy symbol she made aloud a confession of all the sins of her life. She then begged for absolution and for the plenary indulgence granted to her for her last moments by Gregory XI. and Urban VI. Several times also she asked her mother's blessing, for Lapa, ever faithful, was watching by her beloved daughter. But the poor mother, overwhelmed with grief, replied by begging Catharine to obtain by her prayers that she might not offend God in her sorrow. Then the dying saint prayed aloud for the Pope, the Holy Church, and for all those confided to her care. Finally she made the sign of the Cross, and having implored the help of the Precious Blood, she uttered the words, "O Blood, O Blood! Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and with a countenance radiant as that of an angel, she bowed her head, like even in her death to the One Supreme Object of her affections. Her precious death took place on the 29th of April, 1380, her thirty-third year being barely completed.

We have been obliged to pass over in silence the accounts of the many and heroic virtues displayed during the last months of her earthly pilgrimage; we have not been able to dwell on her wondrous love of the Blessed Sacrament, her devotion to the Precious Blood, to the Virgin Mother of her Divine Spouse, and to the saints, His friends and imitators. We have not paused to offer to our readers any of the sayings of heavenly wisdom which fell from her lips and were gathered up by her friends and disciples; nor has it been possible to notice the

writings which she has left behind her to enrich the Church of God, but if these short pages succeed in giving some idea, however slight, of the virtues and heroism of the Saint of Siena, their purpose will have been fulfilled.

St. Catharine was buried in Rome, as befitted her who had given her life for the Church, and her pure and holy body still rests under the High Altar of the Minerva.

In our own times she has been proclaimed Patroness of the Holy City; and God grant that her still being allowed to rest in its centre may be a pledge that He has not forgotten the needs of the Church in the present day, but that in His own good time He will restore Rome to her lawful Master. and that Master to the position so iniquitously wrested from him.

St. Vincent de Paul.

(1576–1660.)

BY THE REV. F. GOLDIE, S.J.

In the cheerless Landes, the sandy reaches at the extreme south-west of France, you may see, as the train speeds onwards to the Pyrenees, a dome rising among a few trees. The building marks the hamlet of Pouy, the birthplace of the great hero of Catholic charity, Vincent de Paul. It was on the Tuesday in Easter-week, April 24, 1576, that this son of poor peasants first saw the light. He grew up to the hard life of those around him, and he was still but a child when he was set to look after the few sheep which his father possessed.

Tradition pointed out the hollowed trunk of an old oak, which had served the little Vincent as a shelter against the pelting rain or driving wind. He had made it into a sort of cell or oratory, where he used to spend long time in prayer. There was a chapel hard by, dedicated to our Lady, a favourite pilgrimage blessed by God as a source of grace and help for the simple and believing peasants. The love of Mary, ever a sign of right Catholic feeling, made this chapel his favourite resort. He brought wild flowers to decorate it, and would let out his heart there in joyful hymns to his Queen and Mother.

A kindred love was that which he had, poor though he was, to any who were poorer than himself. When

his parents sent him to the mill with corn to be ground, he would, on his way back, give a handful of flour to any beggar he might meet, and Vincent's father had too Christian a heart to find fault with his child's generosity. Once some one gave him, or he had saved, the sum of fifteen pence, no small store in those days for a peasant lad. But he could not keep it; even his clothes sometimes went to those who were in need. He was kind and he was prayerful, and his parents thought that if he were a priest he might be a help to them in their poverty: so when Vincent was twelve years old, his father placed him at school with the Franciscans in the little town of Dax hard by.

John de Paul was doing God's work, though not in God's way, and his worldly aims about his son were destined to be thoroughly disappointed, for Vincent always held in after life strong views against raising his family from their humble station. When he had become the almsgiver of kings, and streams of money flowed through his hands, he never could be induced even to say a word for those whom he had left behind. Nor was this from any want of affection; for the only time he went to visit them when a priest, he owned afterwards that he cried bitterly at parting, that with these tears there came a strong desire to help his brothers and sisters out of his salary, and that he had to battle with this yearning for full three months.

So diligently did the boy work, and so successfully, that in barely four years he was sufficiently educated to become tutor to the children of a barrister of some position in the town. Only in 1598 did Vincent receive the tonsure, and begin at Toulouse his studies of theology. His father shortly after sold two of his oxen, and sent their price to start him in life as a poor scholar at the University of Saragossa.

But the air was full of disputes on Grace. There was more discussion than divinity. So Vincent returned to France and resumed his studies at Toulouse. His father died about the same time and left him a share

of his scanty goods; but of these the young ecclesiastic would have none, and, to support himself, he had to accept the post of schoolmaster to the sons of the gentry of the neighbourhood. It was very hard for Vincent to follow the course of theology, and to direct the school at the same time; but courage bore him through, and in 1600 he was ordained priest. He never lost his holy dread of that sublime dignity, and we are told that he chose for the place of his first Mass a little mountain chapel in the deep solitude of a wood, so that no public ceremony should cause distractions at that solemn moment. He still continued his studies for another few years, when he took his degree of Bachelor of Divinity; and, as was the custom with graduates in those times, he gave public lectures on theology.

So highly was Vincent esteemed that he was presented with a living as parish priest. Some one however had been beforehand with him, and obtained the post; and though the matter was quite open to dispute, the good priest shrunk from any litigation, and at once gave up all claim to the benefice.

Some business had taken St. Vincent to Marseilles. The weather was fine, and he accepted the invitation of a friend to return by boat on the bright Mediterranean as far as Narbonne. Suddenly—no rare thing in those days—three Turkish corsairs appeared. They bore down upon the Frenchmen, and, though passengers and crew fought stoutly, before long two or three of them were killed, all the rest were wounded, and the ship had to yield to the enemy. Vincent was struck by an arrow and that severely. The prisoners' wounds were but roughly bandaged; they were taken through the town, with a chain around their necks and then brought back to the ship where—St. Vincent tells us the story—"the slave merchants came to see who could eat heartily and who could not, and to examine if our wounds were mortal. When that was over they led us back to the great square, and the merchant looked at us just as you do at a horse or an ox when you are going to buy one,

making us open our mouths to see our teeth, feeling our sides, probing our wounds, forcing us to show our paces, to trot and run, to lift weights and also to wrestle to test our strength, and a thousand other brutalities."

St. Vincent was bought by a fisherman; but as he was no sailor, he was resold to an old man, half alchymist, half doctor, who treated him kindly, and who would gladly have initiated his slave into the mysteries of his art, had he not steadily refused all his tempting offers. After a year the poor old man was carried off by order of the Sultan to work for the grand Turk, and the doctor's nephew sold Vincent to an apostate Savoyard. As the Saint was digging on the estate, a Turkish wife of his employer begged him to sing to her. With tears in his eyes he entoned the 136th Psalm, *Upon the waters of Babylon*, and then at her request sang the *Salve Regina* and other hymns. So delighted was she that the same night she blamed her husband for leaving a religion which seemed to her so holy. The words went deep into the man's soul, and he told Vincent on the following day that he would flee away with him to Europe as soon as he had the chance. Ten months however went by before the chance arrived, when at length, in a small boat, the two escaped to France. From France Vincent accompanied his deliverer, who had been solemnly reconciled to the Church, to seek for him a place of penance in Rome, where he wished of his own accord to expiate his crimes. The penitent entered the charitable order of St. John of God, or, as they are called in Italy, the Do-good-Brothers.

The terrible hardships, the heroic struggle for his faith and virtue, the sight of the sufferings and moral dangers of the other Christian slaves had been the best of schools for St. Vincent's after life. But it looked as if a far different career, and that a brilliant one in the eyes of the world, was opening out to the peasant's son. He was introduced at the Papal Court by the Legate who had brought him and the prodigal son to the Eternal City. He was taken into the councils of the French Ambas-

sador and envoys, and was sent on an errand of trust to King Henry IV. of France; and on his return made almoner to the ex-Queen Margaret. The Crown was then the fount of honours, ecclesiastical as well as civil. But St. Vincent was as anxious to escape from the Court as he had been to flee from Tunis. He shared a modest room with a magistrate from his own part of France, in an out-of-the-way quarter, and he gave much time to visiting a neighbouring hospital. One day when St. Vincent was ill in bed, this gentleman left a cupboard open, in which he kept a large sum of money. The chemist's lad, who came to bring some medicine to the sick Saint, while searching for a glass, came upon the treasure, and he carried it off while Vincent was asleep. When the magistrate discovered the theft, not only did he accuse Vincent of it, but went round about to his acquaintances and told them all that it was this priest who had robbed him. Six long years after, the youth, who had been arrested for another offence, sent to the magistrate to confess his crime, and to restore to him the money he had taken. Vincent's only defence all the while had been to say, "God knows the truth!"

St. Vincent had met, in his visits to the hospital, the holy founder of the French Oratory, de Berulle, and a strong friendship had grown up between them. After his unpleasant experience, Vincent resolved never to lodge with strangers, and his new friend gladly gave him a room in his religious house.

There was at that time a learned divine who had won a great name by his controversies with the Protestants. The Queen, who was very cultured, and loved to surround herself by men of intellect, invited this doctor to her court. The life of idleness left his soul open to the assaults of the tempter. The objections he had so often refuted rose up with tremendous power against him. Nor could he turn to God without being assailed with such doubt and disbelief that they almost drove him to despair, and in this mental torture, the enemy urged him to end his misery by taking his own life. Prayer became

impossible to him, and he was forced even to be dispensed from saying his office. His health broke down under the strain, but the temptation only grew the stronger. St. Vincent, in his deep pity for his poor soul, prayed God to deliver his friend, even at the price of himself accepting the struggle or any other trial which Heaven might be pleased to send.

Faith vivid and clear came back to the divine, and he died shortly after, full of gratitude to God for this rescue from temptation and even for the temptation itself, which had proved to him a source of so much merit. But the storm which had left his soul had passed into that of Vincent. All his faith seemed to have gone from the holy man, and he felt as if he was given up to Satan. But he met the danger with the tactics of a saint. He resolved always to do exactly the opposite to that which the devil suggested to him. He hoped against hope; he prayed; he did penance. He wrote out a profession of faith, with a disclaimer of any consent to the thoughts of unbelief, and this he carried in his breast. Whenever temptation came upon him, and it was constantly recurring, he placed his hand on the declaration as a silent act of faith. Four years the struggle lasted, yet never had he to accuse himself of having once fallen or even stumbled. At length, in a hurricane of doubt more violent than ever, he felt called to devote the rest of his days, by a solemn resolution, to God in the person of the afflicted. It was the seal of his life-long vocation, and the clouds lifted, never again to come between him and the clear-sighted vision of a vivid faith.

In 1612, de Berulle, who was his director, and knew his ardent wish to labour for souls, obtained for him a country parish; and he gladly fled from Paris and from his post of honour to devote himself to his new work. He rebuilt the church, and still more, he sanctified the people. But in a few months Father de Berulle, to whom he paid a religious obedience, ordered him to undertake the education of the children of Emmanuel de Gondi, the Marshal de Retz. The Gondi was one

of those many Italian families which under the protection of the Florentine queen-mother, Mary de Medici, had risen to the height of power in France. In their magnificent houses in town and country, at which he was forced to dwell, St. Vincent led the life of a hermit, taking no part in the splendours around him, never leaving his room except for some duty. He made it a rule never to go to see the Marshal and his lady except when summoned, and never to mix himself up in any matter which did not directly concern his charge. To keep himself closer to God he resolved to see in the person of his employer our Blessed Lord, in the mistress of the house our Blessed Lady, and in the visitors, the servants, the crowds of people that flocked in and out of the house, the disciples and surroundings of his Divine Master. This simple device made him keep the remembrance of his Heavenly Lord through the crowded days of succeeding years. So too he then began, what was a life-long custom with him, never to answer any question put to him without briefly lifting his heart to God to learn from Heaven the reply which he had to give. He faithfully gave the early morning to God, and, whenever he could, without neglecting his duties, he came back again to Him by prayer, and that many a time by night and by day. The holiness of St. Vincent soon showed its power, and the great establishments of his master became models of order and piety.

When the family went to any of their country seats, St. Vincent became the apostle of the neighbourhood, and, ably supported by the excellent wife of the Marshal, devoted himself to the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor tenants. His health broke down under the stress of work (1616), and he had a sharp and severe illness. He was hardly well again when one day an old man in the neighbourhood who was dying sent to beg St. Vincent to attend him. He passed for a very excellent Catholic. The Saint went at once, and urged the patient to make a general confession. The dying

man hesitated; but he at length consented. So full was he of contrition for the past, that he freely owned to Madame de Gondi, when she came to see him "Ah! my lady, I should have been damned had I not made a general confession, because of some great sins, of which I had never dared to accuse myself." So struck was the Countess with this startling announcement, that she implored the Saint to preach to her tenants upon the good of making a general confession. He did so on Jan. 25, 1617, the Conversion of St. Paul; and so universally was his advice followed that he had to call in the Jesuit Fathers of Amiens to help to hear the throng of penitents. The Countess offered at once a large endowment to any Order that would accept the charge of preaching missions every five years on her estates. None could be found to undertake the work, and thus it was that St. Vincent of Paul had to establish his *Congregation of the Mission* for this special work.

A second time St. Vincent escaped from the luxuries and comforts of high life, and secretly went off to a parish where irreligion and error had tainted both shepherds and sheep; and, though the Countess obtained his recall a few months later, he had already converted the place, and in a society of ladies, banded together for works of mercy, he had sown the first seeds of another of his greatest works, the *Sisters of Charity*.

A new field opened out to his zeal. Gondi was the head of the galleys of France, and in that post he had the care of the swarms of unhappy galley slaves who gave the motive power to the men-of-war of those days. The prisoners, captives of war, victims of justice, and often of injustice, were hardly regarded as human beings, and when waiting for embarkation were prepared for the horrors of the rowing bench and of the lower decks by an imprisonment where the ordinary laws of health and decency seemed utterly disregarded. Chained by massive fetters, without any hope to cheer them, the felons gave way to rage against God; and nothing but the heroic love and patience of a saint could comfort or console them.

A story runs that, finding one of these galley slaves in a fury of despair at the thought of his wife and children whom he had left to starve, Vincent set him free and took upon himself the prisoner's fetters. It was some weeks before the missing Saint was discovered and was released from his voluntary imprisonment. But even his new duties as chaplain-in-chief to the French fleet did not prevent St. Vincent from giving himself to his work of country missions. He gathered together a few zealous helpers, and on March 1, 1624, two of them were sent by St. Vincent to take possession of a ruinous house which the Archbishop of Paris, de Retz, the brother of Gondi, had assigned to them. The Countess paid down a sum she had promised as an endowment, and then God called her to her reward. The Congregation of the Mission had begun, and St. Vincent was left free to train and to direct it.

We seem to be quite familiar with the Saint's outer man, from the number of portraits and statues which exist of him. His face, with its large long nose, was plain if not ugly, but it was lit up by the charm of a sweetness and affability, which, though it seemed to be so natural, was in reality the fruit of long control. For he was of a melancholy and reserved character, and inclined to be hard on the faults of others; but so vigorously did he attack and overcome this tendency that his charming manners or rather his hearty and genial warmth, without a tinge of mere worldly politeness, attracted everyone to him. His frame was shattered by the hardship of his slavery, but to the end he was erect and full of activity. His head, massive and slightly bald, showed a man of sound judgement, and of far more than ordinary power. His long years of theological study had given him a reserve of power which, when occasion demanded, even his modesty could not conceal. He was as able to carry out, as he was quick to conceive, schemes whose vastness might otherwise have been well taken for the dreams of a visionary. Rarely has one man undertaken so much;

rarely has any one accomplished so much. And the very fact that his works have lasted through the changes and storms of so many years is a proof of his calm and well-balanced judgement which never seemed to err.

If he was the Saint of active charity, he was not less the Saint of good sense. Critics—and what a large and miscellaneous class they are!—found fault with his slowness in coming to a decision. He was too clear-sighted to be swift; for difficulties and objections that others overlooked, he took in at a glance. But there was a deeper reason for his slowness. "Do not tread on the heels of Providence, who is our guide," was one of his many wise yet homely sayings. He gave God the chance to work His holy will because he waited for His direction. And though, with his lowly idea of himself, he shrunk from beginning anything in which God did not distinctly manifest His will, never did he shrink from fatigue, obloquy or difficulty when once that will had laid a work upon him. For sound as was his judgement, it was his entire devotion to God, whom he had come by long practice to seek and to find in all, that was after all the chief characteristic of St. Vincent. "In a poor man I do not notice his rough outside, his coarseness and stupidity, but I look at the reverse of the medal, and I see thereon nothing save the Son of God, poor by His own choice, a folly to the Gentiles, a scandal to the Jews." And so in Jesus Christ he loved the poorest of the poor, the most wretched of outcasts. To one person alone he was always severe, even to cruelty, for he chastised his own body as did St. Paul, lest he himself should be a castaway, by scourge and hair shirt, by frequent fast, by kneeling for hours on the floor in the cold of winter mornings. And so entire was the control he acquired of himself, that he seemed as if he had none of the lower passions.

Like loved like. The saintly bishop, the gentle St. Francis of Sales, made his acquaintance in Paris, and committed to the charge of his new friend his house of the

Visitation Nuns at Paris, a clear proof of the high esteem in which the holy founder and St. Jane Chantal held our Saint. But fresh duties served to feed Vincent's never satiated zeal for souls. The Societies of Charity of pious ladies which he had founded in so many parts of France, had grown and prospered under the direction and entire devotedness of a widow lady, Madame le Gras, one of the penitents and spiritual children of St. Vincent. But it soon became evident that something more stable and more firmly constituted was needed to do the work that grew under their hands.

Ladies who had home duties could but give a limited time to the calls of external charity. Neither were delicately-nurtured dames, fresh from the refinements of fashionable society, suited for the rough work of nursing in the public hospitals. Nor were their servant-maids, whom they sometimes sent as substitutes, always very willing or very capable. It was evident that the work could not depend on mere volunteers. St. Vincent had often in the course of his missions come across poor young women of holy life and high ideal but whose lowly station and absence of all dowry seemed to close to these any hope of religious life. While preaching in a country village he met with a peasant girl who while minding the cows had taught herself to read in order that she in turn might teach the poor children of the neighbourhood, and she consulted the Saint as to whether she should take up this good work. He fully approved. When, however, as usual, the Confraternity of Charity was founded during the Mission, she threw her whole soul and energy into the work. St. Vincent saw her aptitude and devotion, and called her to Paris. There she went so far as to share her bed with a poor woman who was stricken with the plague. She caught the infection, and died. But meantime many other young women of humble life offered to devote themselves to the painful duties which nursing the sick poor involves; and, under the guidance of Madame La Gras (1634) they were formed at once to religious life and external work. The

example of these soon attracted others ; and before long so numerous were they that their holy founder drew up for them a rule, marvellous in its elasticity and in its fitness for the object in view. He placed them under the spiritual care of his own Congregation of the Mission, and the white *cornette* or head-dress of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul is now known in every quarter of the globe. They are as at home in the crowded cities of London and Liverpool, in Peru and Pekin, on American and French battlefields, in far-off missionary lands, as in their own native land of France.

Meanwhile a new centre was given to the Congregation of the Mission, which in turn has given to its Fathers the well-known name of Lazarists. A vast hospital for lepers, with its large endowments and wide pleasure gardens, had, for lack of patients, or for some other reason, sunk down into a quiet retreat for a handful of canons regular. The Prior, as he was named, who enjoyed the revenues, without being himself a religious, was anxious to hand them over, together with the house, to the rising Congregation of St. Vincent. At length, after many obstacles, of which the Saint's modesty was one, the Fathers of the Mission were therein installed ; and the patron Saint of the house being St. Lazarus, the name naturally passed in common parlance to the new comers.

From Vincent's new home in the vast buildings of St. Lazarus, as from an inexhaustible spring, good works of every kind poured forth. The sanctification of the clergy by retreats before ordination has become in Rome and in many other cities the peculiar work of the Lazarists. And to the prayers and tears of St. Vincent were owing the wonderful effects which these retreats were wont to produce. To them too they owed the success which made Bishops in every part of France and in so many other countries seek to share the blessings of which they were the cause.

To keep alight in the hearts of the priests the fire of charity enkindled by these retreats, St. Vincent established weekly meetings—*the Tuesday Conferences*. The

clergy who attended them bound themselves to labour for their own sanctification by the observance of some simple but valuable rules, and they met together on the days fixed to hear exhortations from the spiritual Father on the duties and perfection of their state of life. So high was the reputation which this body of priests obtained, that the great Cardinal Minister of State, Richelieu, used to ask St. Vincent to select from their number the bishops-elect; and during the Saint's lifetime twenty-three archbishops and bishops came from amongst this confraternity, besides Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, and the founder of the Foreign Missions, both of these well-known congregations of secular clergy.

The work of directing ecclesiastical seminaries, and of supplying chaplains to the French army, were among the many works to which St. Vincent dedicated his Lazarists. The Council of Trent had enjoyed the erection of seminaries in every diocese which was sufficiently wealthy and extended to maintain one; or, where this was not the case, a joint seminary for two or more dioceses was to be established. But though, as the Saint writes in one of his letters, the order came from the Holy Ghost, the way in which it was carried out had resulted largely in failure. For, what with the students giving up before their studies were completed, or leaving the seminary to enter religious life, little of the anticipated seed of a fervent and well-trained parochial clergy had come to maturity. St. Vincent considered that of all the seminaries of his time, those only of Rome and Milan had been a success. That the French clergy are now what they are, and that the seminaries to which they owe their training are so flourishing and productive of such good, is in no small degree owing to the wisdom and zeal of St. Vincent. He it was who infused into them his spirit of self-sacrifice and of devotion to souls, which alone can make them fit training grounds for a zealous and devoted clergy.

To aid the sick poor in the great hospital of Paris, where the numbers far exceeded the power of the sisters in attendance to give them necessary care, he called in the charitable ladies of Paris. And wonderful was the spiritual harvest that was gathered in, especially in the frequentation of the Sacraments.

But amidst all this revival of Catholic faith and charity there was growing up a poisonous plant which was destined to become the bane of thousands of souls. The Abbé de Saint Cyran had drunk in at Louvain the half-Calvinist errors of Jansenius, which had found their way into that ancient university. He sought the acquaintance of St. Vincent, and the Saint predicted great things from the devotedness, the learning, and ability of his cultured friend. The Abbé on his side hoped to surprise the good faith of Vincent and to lead him to adopt his unsound opinions. But the clear faith of the Saint was proof against all seductions. Though horrified at the Abbé's expressions, St. Vincent still strove lovingly and wisely to make him abandon his erroneous ideas. The Saint soon recognized that it was the intellectual pride of his friend which was the cause of these his errors.

Later on the Abbé wrote a work against frequent Communion—perhaps the one of his books which has done most harm, even to good Catholics, in these later days—in which, under pretext of respect for the Blessed Sacrament, he taught the faithful to abstain from Holy Communion. St. Vincent ably refuted its fallacies in a letter to one of his Fathers. The activity of Saint Cyran and of his followers threatend to tear in pieces the Church of France. St. Vincent used every effort to induce its hierarchy to appeal to the Pope for a definite sentence on the great work of Jansenius. The Jansenists themselves went to Rome to endeavour to neutralise the petition of the prelates, and to delay the judgement. St. Vincent, on the other hand, induced seven of his friends of the Sorbonne, the great theological college of Paris, to frustrate these intrigues. When

Peter spoke at last by the mouth of the Venerable Innocent X., in 1653, our Saint was greatly rejoiced at the degree. But he proceeded with the greatest gentleness and prudence. He called upon the chief heads of the Jansenist faction in order to induce them to submit to the papal condemnation. They however found in subtle distinctions between matters of right and of fact a way of escape from every decision of Rome. St. Vincent earnestly warned all whom his influence could reach that humility was the sole defence against these, which were among the most dangerous errors which have ever attacked the Church.

Nothing in fact escaped the vigilant eye of Vincent's charity. He was horrified at the frequent duels, which were considered by so many, as they are still upon the Continent, as a matter of positive duty. He founded an association of gentlemen who bound themselves never to challenge, or to accept a challenge; and a very large number of officers of the court and of the army signed the engagement.

St. Vincent is perhaps best known as the friend and protector of the multitude of helpless infants whom the crime of a great capital left fatherless and motherless in the streets of Paris. It is terrible to read of the horrors of baby-farming in those days. The official depôt of deserted children was altogether insufficiently endowed and insufficiently served, and the infants were given to any one, however unworthy of the charge, who either begged for them or bought them. Those who thus obtained were generally utterly unfit to see to the spiritual or bodily needs of the helpless infants. But the long wars of religion had singularly weakened the moral sense in the population. St. Vincent appealed to the pious ladies who were his helpers in his good works. They went to the depôt and were shocked at its darkness and dirt. As a beginning, they took, by lot, eight out of twelve of these poor babies (1638). Madame Le Gras and her Sisters of Charity became true mothers to them. By prayer, the true lever of

action in the Saint's way of thinking, the hearts of many were touched. He himself gave largely of the revenues of St. Lazarus; and the Court, by handsome donations, seconded his efforts. But spite of all these sacrifices, the work to be done soon outran all the funds at St. Vincent's disposal, and the hearts of the workers failed. Again the Saint called the ladies around him. He made a fresh appeal to them; he reminded them that the lives of the little ones were in their hands. If they ceased to be their mothers, they would become their judges. The good ladies broke down, they cried their hearts out, and resolved never to give in again; and before long an ample Foundling Hospital was built and endowed by the State.

(1636–1643.) In the unhappy rivalry of France and Austria, the source of such fatal losses to the Church in Europe, Lorraine—then an independent state—was ravaged by Protestants and Catholics alike. The horrors of war and of famine renewed in that once fruitful land the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem. Not content with freely docking the frugal table of the Fathers to the narrowest limits in order that they might have more to give, St. Vincent begged and implored for aid on all sides. The alms he received were enough to succour twenty-four towns for several years, and he made his Fathers his almoners. The sum was said to have amounted to £400,000 of the money of the day, equal of course to a far larger sum in these times. But even that could not have sufficed, unless God had blessed and multiplied the alms in a perfectly wondrous manner. Vincent was truly *a father of the poor; and the cause which he knew not, he searched out most diligently.*

After the death of Louis XIII., whom St. Vincent attended at his last hour, the widowed queen summoned him to a permanent commission, whose duty was to nominate the bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries of France. He carried out this duty with the utmost indifference to praise or blame, never allow-

ing any motives to govern his choice but the honour of God and the personal merits of the candidate. Cardinal Mazarin was the head of the commission. He set the last example of one, though not in holy orders, holding a number of church livings. It was not likely that his theory would be much in advance of his practice. All powerful though he was, St. Vincent did not fear to oppose his suggestions when they were against justice and right.

Besides all his other occupations, St. Vincent was above all the acting and active Superior of a growing Congregation, which reproduced in its members the insatiable zeal for souls of its founder and father. The work of training, directing, governing that body seemed enough to have absorbed the energies and the time of any one man. Besides their home missions he sent his sons into the scene of his captivity—among his old fellow-slaves of Tunis and Algiers, into far-off Madagascar, into Corsica and Poland.

The iron hand of Cromwell had conquered Ireland, and numbers of faithful Irish had fled to France. These refugees had sought service under the French flag. The Irish regiments suffered severely in the civil wars of the Fronde which convulsed France in the days of the Cardinal-Minister Mazarin, and the remnant of them was accompanied by troops of soldiers' widows and orphans, whose only clothes were the rags of their husbands or fathers who had perished. Half dead with cold and hunger, they tramped on over the snow to the town of Troyes which had been appointed for their winter quarters. St. Vincent straightway sent one of his Irish Fathers to comfort and to aid them. Thanks to the Saint's magnificent alms, the girls and widows were lodged in a hospital where they were taught to earn their living, while the rest were clothed and fed. The good Father preached to them in their native tongue to prepare them for their Easter duties. The whole town caught the infection of St. Vincent's charity, and cheered the hearts of the exiles of Erin by their large-hearted

assistance. They were perishing of hunger, and St. Vincent came to their rescue, at the very time that Paris and its neighbourhood were suffering from the horrors of war.

But the charity of St. Vincent to Ireland and to the Irish people was not satisfied. He must fain send help and comfort to those who were struggling violently but vainly for faith and fatherland against the power of Cromwell. He was, as a bishop of Ireland described him, raised up as Patrick and Malachy had been of old, for the salvation of his country. Besides quantities of clothes, vestments, and large sums of money, Vincent sent in 1646 five of his Irish brethren into the lion's mouth, into all the perils of the merciless war which was being waged, to give their lives if need be for the faithful people. Their labours were chiefly confined to Limerick and to Cashel. Their missions, their catechetical instructions were attended by high and low, by priests and people; the cathedrals were not large enough to hold the crowds. They heard, during their five years of labours, 20,000 general confessions. Amidst the dangers of the siege of Limerick, in the horrors of the plague they never slackened their toil, and it was the burning words of St. Vincent which he wrote to them sustained their courage and devotion. One of the Fathers died of fatigue during the missions. Two were recalled in face of the increasing persecution. Those who remained in the doomed city of Limerick escaped marvellously in disguise, and returned to France in 1682.

The Congregation is not forgotten in the land, and its sons are still loved there as of old.

Charity in every form was the characteristic of our Saint. It was in great things as in small. The multitude of bold and dangerous beggars who infested the streets of Paris was ever increasing. Pity for their souls, as much as, nay more than, for their bodies, made him devise and carry out a project by which begging was prohibited and all the poor were lodged in a house

of charity, and brought up to habits of order. The government gave a large disused manufactory of saltpetre wherein the multitude was housed, and finally took the whole establishment into their own hands. But with the help of his friends among the clergy, the Congregation of the Lazarists undertook the spiritual charge of these four or five thousand souls.

Forced in his old age to employ a carriage,—which he called *his disgrace*,—St. Vincent used it to bring in the poorest and most revolting sufferers whom he found in the streets. If he saw anyone lying on the road-side he would get down, and, when convinced that there was no deceit, and that they were really ill, he offered at once to drive them to the hospital. Once as he was going by, he spied a child crying bitterly and at once he went up to him, asked what was the matter; and when the boy showed him a wound in his hand, he took him off to have it dressed by a surgeon, stayed till all was done, and paid the man for his trouble.

St. Vincent shared, with all old men, the painful void which death makes around them, but it was particularly bitter for one with so tender a heart. His utter disregard for anything approaching comfort, his delicate health, his frequent illnesses never till the very end prevented him from devoting himself to work for others, much less from his direct duties to God. Little by little his maladies increased upon him, at length his legs, swollen and covered with ulcers, refused to bear him, and he had to lie on his hard bed, his nights rendered sleepless by torture. At last the end arrived.

On Sept. 27, 1660, after receiving the last Sacraments, St. Vincent was seated on a chair, for he was too weak to be moved to his bed. One of the clergy under his care begged him to bless the confraternity to which he belonged. The Saint's reply was in the words of St. Paul: "He who hath begun a good work will perfect it ———" His head fell forward and before he could complete the quotation, he had gone to his reward.

The Revolution sacked the house and shrine of the Saint, but respected his remains. St. Lazarus is now a prison: the new shrine is now in the beautiful Chapel of the Lazarists in the Rue de Sèvres at Paris.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has, in the nineteenth century, reproduced his spirit; and, though not founded by him, has borrowed all its strength and guidance from him, whom these lay workers of the Universal Church have taken for their patron. The weapons of their power are patient charity and prayer, as they were his. In their ranks the men of society learn the pleasure of doing good; and from them the poor in turn learn to look on the rich as their brothers—children of the same Father.

Frederick Ozanam.

(1813—1853.)

By B. F. C. Costelloe, M.A.

On a gray Saturday in November, 1831, a provincial attorney's clerk of seventeen, with little money and less knowledge of the world, was crossing the bridge which led, then as now, over the Seine to the students' quarter of Paris. The outward prospect was not very different from what such a lad would see to-day. Down stream, the beautiful façade of the Louvre. Higher up, the majesty of Notre Dame. In front, the classic dome of the Pantheon, upon the hill which for so many centuries had been consecrated by the shrine of St. Geneviève, with the famous halls of the Sorbonne close at hand.

That law student, whose name was Frederick Ozanam, has become in many ways the type and model of the young Catholic layman of modern days. So Lacordaire testified when he described him in later years as "an

ancestor"—the historic seed of an uncounted following. To us, in English-speaking lands, he is less known than he deserves to be. His own story is simple, and it stands written, happily, in the frank and charming letters to his relatives and near friends which they published after his untimely death. It is a beautiful and a saintly life; yet its importance is not so much for what he was as for what he did. The cardinal fact by which Ozanam ought to be remembered is, that without any advantages beyond those which lie within the reach of thousands of the young men who may read these pages, he did a work for God and man which changed the religious life and history of his nation. Whoever would understand him, therefore, must first realize what manner of society the world of Paris was in 1831.

To call it godless would be moderate. The storm which had swept France a generation earlier had, in its way, abolished religion. Napoleon, the cynic of statecraft, had affected to reinstate the Church, only that he might the better check its real growth. The Restoration, fanatical and misdirected, had produced, beyond the narrow circle of its sincere reactionaries, little but hypocrisy on the one hand and exasperation on the other. And the tumults of 1830 had brought chaos back.

The churches were open, but they were deserted. The splendid hierarchy of France sat in the high places, as of old, but met with scant consideration: perhaps because it was itself afraid. The unbelief of our own metropolis is bad enough: but of the Paris to which Ozanam came, it may be broadly said that, outside the *clientèle* of the ecclesiastical establishments, practically no educated men and few of the uneducated even called themselves by the Christian name. As for the schools, they were more frankly unbelieving than they are to-day: and to say that is to say much.

When Ozanam entered the *École de Droit*, he found that there were only three other law students who owned to any religion at all. About the same date, in the

great military academy, a singular young man who desired to make his Easter Communion, found that practically the only way to do so was to go into the infirmary and be visited by the official chaplain as a patient.

Ozanam was born at Milan, to which his father, an old soldier of Napoleon's Italian wars, had retired that he might earn a pittance by teaching French, rather than serve the despot who betrayed the Republic. The family was of Jewish origin* and had settled at Lyons. With a rare energy, the father found time to study medicine and took out a qualification. Then the arrival of the Austrians drove him back with his young family to Lyons, and there Frederick Ozanam spent half his life. The circumstances of his upbringing were, to put it plainly, commonplace. If we did not know that he gave evidence in later years of innate powers of thought and speech, we should have to say that he had no greater chances in life than those of all the millions who are the children of the modern middle class. His father and mother were sincerely religious and very charitable. It was by an accident which befel him in the service of the poor that his father lost his life. But they were nothing more wonderful than other well-living citizens. They were not well born, nor important. They were neither rich nor poor: and with a large family, their means were not enough to do more than give to each the ordinary education of the time.

Frederick was a healthy child. He was not a specially good boy nor a specially bad one. He showed no talent at school, and was not, by his own account, even a diligent scholar. The one thing that is told of him is, that he was so self-willed that when in schoolboy games his playmates wished to make him confess that he was beaten, he would stamp his foot and tell them he "would rather die than say it." Terrible to relate, he actually used to fight! He was, by his own account, "obstinate, passionate, and disobedient," and "lazy to the last

* The name is said to be, in fact, a variant of 'Hosanna.'

degree,"—till the passion of emulation and the pride of success persuaded him to work. His parents evidently made their home a place of sincere, though not obtrusive, religious influences: but the effect of these was not very obvious, so far.

A marked religious experience came with his First Communion, as a boy of eleven or twelve. "May my right hand wither," he wrote at sixteen, "if I ever forget that bright and blessed day." His temper and his whole conduct underwent a change for the better. He became gentle, modest, industrious, and rather scrupulous in his personal conduct though still proud and impatient: such at least was his own estimate in the sketch of his life which he sent as a lad to a boyish confidant.

A few years later, he passed through a trial which to the end of his life he remembered with pain. The current talk of infidelity and the intellectual awakening of higher studies led him to ask himself whether he had any real ground for the placid faith, which had in his home been kept unshaken and undiscussed. He was not yet sixteen, but he was precocious for his years: and though he clung to his faith as a possession he *must* preserve, he could find no sufficient help in the books he read. He was haunted by shifting doubts which he did not reveal to those who might have helped him. Happily, he remained innocent; and he prayed the more, the harder his trial grew. One hard day he turned into a church and prayed, with what he always felt to be an act of consecration, that "if God gave him light to see the Truth, he would devote his life to defending it." The prayer was not unheard, nor the vow forgotten.

He took a course of serious philosophic studies under the Abbé Noirot, an able, sympathetic, and wide-minded man. He worked hard and thought out the problems of the world with all the vehemence of seventeen. And when he was withdrawn from these classes to serve an apprenticeship as a clerk in the attorney's office, he revenged himself, after office hours, by writing a juvenile

treatise against the fashionable heresy of the Saint Simonians.

Nothing, indeed, can be more characteristic of the man than his state of mind at this time. Fortunately his letters exist. They are perfectly simple, even boyish: but they are full of the grave purpose of one who knew that a human life was meant for something else than eating and drinking, and earning the inevitable expense. He looked out upon his country, and he saw that, if his faith were true, it was in a pitiful way. He looked round upon his fellow-Catholics, and he was forced to recognise that they were not doing, or likely to do, much that could be helpful. The folk of the old school could not understand the new demands nor the strange language of the successors of the men of '98. If the Catholic youth were to be of any help, they must first try faithfully to understand and loyally to uphold all that was true in the great upheaval, so that they might the better disentangle it from the frauds and follies of the flippant prophets of the day. Stuck on his office stool, with only the talk of a narrow provincial circle and the news of the Lyons newspaper to guide him, he felt "like a man looking through a bad eye-glass." But he set himself, as a first duty, to understand his time against the day when he should be wanted; and the event proved his success.

Another mark of his youthful Christianity was the note of a splendid hope. "I feel," he says, "that the past is falling to pieces, that the foundations of the building we have known are shaken, that an earthquake has changed the whole face of the earth." What then? "I believe in Providence," he answers; "and I do not despair of my country." Amid the wreck of social and political institutions, he is content to say: there exists, as the presupposition and the bottom fact of human life, this inevitable truth which we call religion—the revelation of God—the providence of history—the divine essence in the changing world. This religious truth, however many forms it may take or

seem to take, brings you out, if you sincerely follow it, by mere necessity to the Catholic Faith, as its one authentic expression. "This," he said, "is what society wants, and it is equally what I want." To suppose that it was come to an end because Voltaire laughed at it, or because Saint Simon called it an anachronism, would be mere cowardice and futility. "Let us rally," cries the sanguine lad to his college friends, "let us unite our efforts and create a work together. Let us point to the faith as a harbour light for those who are tossed upon the dark and stormy sea."

Of the difficulties he is well aware. He has discussed them with M. Noirot. He must learn at least twelve languages, so that he may master the original documents. All the sciences that are concerned with cosmogony must evidently be investigated; and then all history has to be studied likewise. Perhaps if he start at eighteen he may be able to write a book at thirty-five. It is very audacious: but of the result there is for him no question. "In the might of her eternal youth, Catholicism shall arise again and lead the world out to civilization and to happiness; and the day will come when all mankind will gather to that shelter."

It is a singular picture—this unformed provincial lawyer's clerk, not yet eighteen, who "for two years" has heard the voice of God calling to him to be a prophet in a godless time. They may liken him, if they choose, to the frog of La Fontaine. But in his soul there is no shadow of vanity and no thought of himself. He chides his cousin, who has been fired by his great plan, for speaking about "glory." But his soul lifts itself on wings at the mere thought of how good a thing it is to spend himself in such a cause. "I am filled with intellectual delight—for the work is magnificent, and I am young."

It was no personal ambition. It was the conviction that his duty as a Catholic and a man was to bear his part in the movement of the time. This, as it was his boyish inspiration, was the keynote of his life. As he

saw more of the world, he felt more and more keenly that the supineness of those who believed, was the '*gran rifiuto*'—the cowardly refusal of a duty of charity to their struggling or bewildered fellows. If even a few insignificant students made a stand against the ridicule, which was the most powerful enemy then as now of all good things in France, an uncounted number of the weaker brethren might be rescued from the common wreck. As a Christian citizen, his duty was not limited to personal devotion and the avoidance of the grosser sins. What light he had, must shine. What talents God had given him, great or small, he must put out to use.

At the *Collège de France*, he found that the professors were accustomed to court a cheap popularity by attacks on Revelation, or Christianity, or the Church. Ozanam therefore led the way in organizing a series of protests and set answers from the Catholic students. The results were astonishingly rapid: for the fashionable scepticism was an arrant intellectual sham. Of one of their first protests, Ozanam writes: "Our answers were publicly read, and produced the best effect: on the professor, who as good as retracted his words, and on the class, who applauded. The most useful thing in it all is, that it enables us to show the students of the day that one may be a Catholic and yet have common sense, and that one may love liberty and religion at the same time."

This was another keynote of his mission. To him it was a misery that Catholicism in France had come to be treated both by friend and by foe as if it were opposed to the idea of human freedom. Of any such antithesis the lad had an instinctive horror: and in his maturer years he was one of the best fighters in that brilliant band of men who did much to destroy the mischievous superstition.

During this time, Ozanam was boarding with a scientific man of great celebrity but scanty means, who was also a sincere Catholic, M. Ampère. He had

taken in the lad out of kindness, and took a warm interest in his progress. At this house, No. 19 Rue des Fossés St. Victor, he met many of the most learned men of the day, and he describes them pleasantly in his letters. His call on M. de Châteaubriand had an unexpected result. The poet asked him if he had been to the theatres. The lad had promised his parents not to go, for the times were notably vicious. But he was half afraid to confess it for fear the great man would laugh at him. On the contrary, he praised his resolve warmly, and added an epigram, which combined, no doubt, a literary and a moral judgment. "You would gain nothing," he said, "and you might lose a great deal."

It is not easy for us to estimate the amount of moral fortitude which it required to enable a lad like Ozanam to preserve "the white flower of a blameless life" in the midst of the dangers of that society. He had his interior enemies. After the religious experiences we have noted, he does not seem to have again lost hold of the Catholic Faith. But he has to complain sadly of that kind of pride which is discontented "because it expects so much from self and is disappointed." Modest and humble as he was in intention, his natural bent was apparently the reverse. All his life he was liable to these fits of discontent, which in a man less prayerful or less dutiful, would have embittered his existence. But his safeguard was, in the first place, his sincere devotion; and in the next place, his constant sense that, whether great or small, he had a work to do. His natural impulse was to build great projects, and to plan a life so beautiful and grand that it should contain all imaginable desires. But that, he feels, is mere folly. Our plan will assuredly be misdrawn, for we cannot lift ourselves to any point of view from which we could see the whole design. And why should we strain after it? The will of God, which is our work, is accomplished from day to day. Unless we can see some clear and paramount vocation that we needs must follow, let us think of ourselves as workmen who are

told each hour the task they have to perform in the hour ahead. If we so follow the orders of the great Architect in trust and faithfulness, we shall accomplish our building as well as if we had the whole plan before us from the first. Indeed, his train of thought at this time is singularly like that which inspired Newman when he wrote his best-known hymn. "The greatest," said Ozanam, "are they who did not plan their destinies, but let themselves be taken by the hand and led."

All this, of course, might have sunk into a feeble impotence, except that he is conscious at every moment of the call of the Master's work. He felt Christianity, to use his own expression, not merely as a sphere of thought and of worship, but as a sphere of action, of will, of conduct. He was indeed conscious of a certain strain of irresolution in himself: and he set himself to conquer it. What place God meant him to fill in the life of the time, he waited to be told. But the present duty was to prepare himself, first by the diligent pursuit of his work as a student, and then by taking advantage of such opportunities to help his neighbours as Providence might open out.

Happily at this very crisis of his life, his holidays took him to Italy. His sensitive spirit was deeply moved by the new world of beauty, which to him was instinct on every hand with the genius of the Christian Church. In the Stanze of the Vatican, he stood entranced before that wonder—the Disputa of Raphael—in which the range and majesty of the Catholic Tradition is summed up as none but a world-artist could have translated it. To Ozanam it was not only a piece of consummate beauty: it was also the key of history. And as he looked at it he was impressed by the prominence of Dante, with his poet's crown, among the Doctors and the Popes of all the centuries. He returned to Italy more than once, and made Dante, in some sense, the study of his life. But probably the greatest advantage which he gained from this college holiday was, that it enabled him to realise, as few can wholly realise except in Italy, the

inevitable force and the sane simplicity of the Catholic Tradition.

In 1833, the *rapprochement* between the professed Christians among the students, which Ozanam's protests had created, began to take a definite shape in a series of meetings for historical and literary discussion at the office of M. Bailly's paper, the *Tribune Catholique*. The Saint-Simonians and other antagonists were allowed to come, and the debates grew lively. Ozanam was the real leader of the party, and his eloquence, fired with conviction, began to tell. He did not think of it as a mere debating society. It was to him a conference of friends working out together a system of knowledge under the inspiration of Catholic ideas. Discussion in the hot air of the debate, and afterwards when the little knot of friends walked home together through the shadow of the Panthéon,—all discussion was to him an education for his work, the work of making the Catholic Truth intelligible to the deaf ears of the time. But this, as he soon confessed, was not enough.

The Saint-Simonians, whose doctrine was merely a well-meaning humanitarianism, were fond of taunting the brilliant defender of Christianity with the cry, "Show us your works!" It may be conceded, they said, that Christianity is a beautiful idea. It may be that it once did much to civilize humanity. It may be that it has formed and inspired a great number of noble and saintly lives. But what has it to do with the modern world? Where is it in the Paris of to-day? There is no social work which it can show. The needs of the time are crying, and the air is full of change and striving, in which the Christian Church is but a hindrance and a wreck. Whatever it may be in history, Catholicism is dead.

In the rooms of his friend Lallier, one night, after a brilliant debate, Ozanam mooted the idea that they might organize a meeting of some of the leaders of the movement, for the purpose not only of preparing their discussions, but also of starting some good enterprise

which, in a modest way, might meet this charge that no social work was going on. The band of comrades presently saw that this was a vital idea, and eight of them, with old M. Bailly in the chair, held the first Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in the back-room of the newspaper office, in May, 1833.

The scheme was yet quite vague. All they knew was, that they meant it to be in the service of the poor. Their first task was to decide what they should do: and in this M. Bailly, seconded keenly by Ozanam, gave excellent advice. "Do not be content to dole out alms," they said; "that is a very cheap and unwise charity, even if you had wealth: and as it is, you have none. Go and make friends among the poor. Give to each family what personal help your own better training enables you to give. In one place it will be legal, in another medical. To some, you may judiciously give practical advice. For others, you may procure work In all cases, help them to help themselves, and consider it your primary duty, whether you take them tickets or not, to render some personal service."

A few rules were soon settled, and they set out to visit a list of cases supplied by Sœur Rosalie. Their chief commandments were, that no politics were to be discussed, and that no one was to use the Society in any way for personal advancement. A weekly conference was to be held, at which the visiting brothers were to report their cases, and consult as to what help could best be given.

There was to be a secret collection to defray what little cost they had incurred, including the tickets, which they used sparingly, and regarded as merely an accessory to their real work.

Ozanam's first 'case' was a mother with five children, whose drunken husband beat them frequently, and took all her earnings, so that she and the children were starving. Ozanam's legal knowledge enabled him presently to discover that the marriage was invalid, and that the brute had no legal rights. Then he removed the family out of his reach, and violence was threatened.

A small extra collection at the Conference provided the means to send some of them back to their home in Brittany. Two of the boys were taken into the printing office as apprentices and cared for by M. Bailly—the germ, as afterwards appeared, of the whole work of the 'Patronage,' or care of working boys, which has since played so large a part in the work of Catholic charity in France.

The eight students who formed the first "Conference" had no idea of starting a world-wide society. "At first," as Ozanam said in 1853, when he was starting at Florence a new Conference of the then vast confraternity, "we would not open the doors of our little assembly to anyone else. But God had other views with respect to us. That association of a few personal friends became, in God's Providence, the nucleus of an immense family of brothers, destined to spread over a great part of Europe." The eight were, in fact, very chary of admitting even friends who might not come to their modest work in the same spirit. But a few came, and after these, more. Presently, as the impulse of a lay revival of Catholic charity spread over Paris, the "Conference" became so large as to be unmanageable, and it was divided, the unity of purpose being maintained by a central council and by general meetings of all the brothers. A body of rules, extremely simple, and in the main extremely wise, was drawn up by the founders and approved at Rome. The work was spread before long to those provincial towns of France with which the more zealous of the Parisian brotherhood were connected, and in twenty years, there were counted 2000 active brothers in Paris alone, with 5000 poor households under their charitable care, besides 500 vigorous conferences in other parts of France, and offshoots in Belgium and Spain, in England and America.

In truth, the extension of the Society has gone on without intermission, in spite of local vicissitudes, to the present time. The interference of the French Government with all forms of association threatened

the French Society at one time with official suppression, but it survived: and even in the evil days which have again fallen upon the Church in France, the number of existing Conferences there is given at 1,200, having over 21,000 active members.

The vigour and the practical efficiency of the work sometimes waxes and sometimes wanes, according as its members here and there may lose or may regain the spirit of the founder. But the work which he so simply started has grown, because it has provided everywhere a simple and easily adapted means of making lay work efficient for practical social helpfulness in a truly Catholic spirit, and with the fullest sanction of the Church. It would be out of place to describe here the astonishing progress of the Society as an international organization. Its success in Italy was largely promoted, in spite of much opposition from the petty courts and some inertia among the clergy, by the efforts of Ozanam himself. For whether he travelled as a tourist, a student, or an invalid, he never forgot to be a missionary. At present, there are about 300 Italian Conferences. But it is apparently in Belgium and in Catholic Germany that the greatest activity has arisen. The present active membership in Belgium is returned at 11,000, and the German membership, including Austria, is about 12,000. The Society extended, at a comparatively early date, to South America and to the Levant. More recently, it has been extending widely throughout the English-speaking lands. In England, where it was founded in 1844, it has waxed and waned, as elsewhere; but the number of conferences now at work is 133, and it is increasing. In Ireland there are 150, in Scotland 55, in British India 38, in Canada 101, and in the United States 398: while there are offshoots at the Cape, and in Egypt, and at Shanghai, and a vigorous recent development in Australia.*

* The addresses of Conferences in England and elsewhere are to be found in the Annual Report of the S.V.P. Society in England, copies of which may be had from the writer at 33 Chancery Lane, E.C.

In all, it is computed that at the present moment there are throughout the world about 4,800 Conferences, with 85,000 active members, and as many more affiliated as honorary members or otherwise. That many of these do but little, is likely enough; for the spirit of Ozanam, natural as it should be to any young Catholic, is sadly rare. But even a little is better than nothing, and the aggregate good is enormous. He himself hoped that some day it might be possible to see all young men of heart and intelligence united in a scheme of charity, so that a vast and generous association might be formed all over the country for the help of the poor. Here, as always throughout his speeches to the Brotherhood, the key-note to Ozanam is, that it is the *young* Catholics who can, if they are intelligent and self-sacrificing, save the modern world. It is as true still as it was then.

Before the Society of Charity was many weeks old, they resolved to make a public profession of faith on the Feast of Corpus Christi. As the processions were all stopped in Paris, they sallied out to Nanterre, the birth-place of St. Geneviève, to the number of thirty, and joined fervently with the astonished peasants—winding up the day, be it said, with a rattling dinner (at 1/8 a head) at one of the beautiful inns of St. Germain-en-Laye.

But Ozanam desired that the work of presenting the Catholic Truth in a speech intelligible to his generation should be started on a larger scale. He felt that the sermons then to be heard in the churches of Paris were ill-suited to the time. He had heard the young Abbé Lacordaire, still an unconsidered lecturer in the chapel of a private college; and his intuition told him that he had found the man who could realize his early dream, and state the claims of the Catholic Truth in the ears of modern Paris, so that all who would, might hear and understand.

At once the impetuous lad conferred with his friends, and they agreed to go next day and petition the Archbishop to send for Lacordaire and ask him to preach

a series of "conferences" at Notre Dame. The Abbé was known of course to have been one of the brilliant band of Catholic Liberals who had gathered about M. de Lamennais in the days of the *Avenir*. The leader, grown wild and lawless, had been more or less discountenanced and was in revolt. Some of his pupils, like George Sand, fell away. But the others, including Montalembert and the Abbé Gerbet, remained faithful children of the Church, though they were all, as Lacordaire proclaimed upon his death-bed, Liberals to the last.

It was hardly wonderful that the Archbishop did not at once accept the startling suggestion of the unknown law student from Lyons, though he received him with all kindness. Lacordaire knew nothing, either of Ozanam or of his scheme. Undaunted by the refusal, Ozanam rallied his students, got up a big petition, and went back to the Archbishop. They found that he had determined to do something—namely, to have a course of sermons by the best preachers of the day: and he proceeded to introduce the students to the eloquent divines, who chanced to be at that moment assembled in the next room. The audacious young man, thus cornered, endeavoured to set forth what he and his friends understood to be the needs of the time. The old gentlemen were very gracious, but they did not understand. The sermons were duly preached, and they were a failure.

Meanwhile, Lacordaire was again preaching in the little college chapel, and Ozanam and all his cohort thronged to hear him. It was what they longed that all the world should hear—the old truths in the language of the new time. The church dignitaries were alarmed. They tried to persuade the Archbishop to silence the preacher: not in the least for any fault of orthodoxy, but because, in their timid conservatism, they feared all novelty. But the young men agitated more and more boldly, and the Archbishop at last sent Lacordaire to Notre Dame. What the result was, all the world knows.

It was like the preaching of the Apostles after Pentecost. The young men of St. Vincent de Paul gathered like a bodyguard round the pulpit. But the flippant sceptics, the careless *boulevardiers*, and the frivolous fine ladies came in thousands; and, for the first time since 1798, a real revival of religion arose in Paris. The Archbishop, as the last conference closed, publicly thanked the preacher, and named him Canon of the Cathedral.

Thenceforward, Lacordaire and Ozanam were allies, though they were never in very intimate personal relation. Probably the preacher never knew what efforts the student had made in his behalf: but he appreciated his value. He sent all his young men to the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul: and in days long after, he bore testimony to the fact that Ozanam was one of the makers of the new France.

In 1837, the student became a barrister, and resolved, as his practice was but poor, to prepare himself for proceeding to the degree of Doctor of Letters, being busy all the while on his beloved Dante. There were two or three chances opening, which led him to think of a Professorship as a possible and congenial career. He half thought that he might feel called to take up a religious life. His thesis for the Doctorate, an oration on Dante created a furore: and he was appointed in 1839 to a Professorship of Law in his native city. Thither he carried, at a sacrifice of better prospects and for the sake of a sick mother, his enthusiasm and his zeal for the development of charitable societies. They got up, without prejudice to their visiting work, a library and a school among the soldiers, and did what they could to carry a little Christian instruction into the unpromising corners of the barrack-room. But they had their trials. The pious party in a French provincial town was not, in those days, remarkable either for courage or wisdom. A section of the good people of Lyons, to whom, as he said, "their personal opinion on politics was an extra article of the creed," attacked the new notions, and the clergy were not always friendly.

He was harassed by constant anxiety for his mother's health, and was in great doubt as to his own future; for Lacordaire, who was now refounding in France the Order of St Dominic, was anxious that Ozanam should become a 'Friar Preacher' too.

After his mother's death, in 1840, he spent a short holiday in Paris, where he found his work spreading fast in every direction. Attending a general meeting of the Society of Charity, he found 600 assembled, including many notable writers of the new Catholic school. Among the students, whom he most rejoiced to see, he counted one-fifth of the whole strength of the *École Normale*—a change almost incredible from the state of things in which his own student days had begun. In thirty provincial towns the work was advancing. Its total brotherhood had reached two thousand.

On the same visit, M. Cousin, who was much impressed by his studies on Dante (now published), asked him to compete for the Paris Professorship of Literature. He went in with much misgiving, but making, as he said, "such an act of faith in God as I never made before." His name came out first. He regarded this success as deciding his vocation, and resolved to devote himself to that career. Almost at the same time he became engaged to be married to the sister of a student friend. A precarious position in Paris at £150 a year was now open to him, and he welcomed it as giving him back the opportunity, which he had lost in retiring to Lyons, to guide and help with his mature powers that revival of Catholic thought and effort in the capital, which he himself had started as an eager boy. As it chanced, however, the Minister of Public Instruction presently offered him a second Professorship at Lyons, which would have meant comparative affluence and security, though it would have been fatal to his influence on the vital movements of French life. The prudent parents of his provincial fiancée thought him mad to sacrifice the certainty of a comfortable and excellent position for the quixotic hope of helping Paris. But

his fiancée believed in his mission, and cheerfully elected for poverty. His marriage followed soon, and after it, a holiday in Italy, to pay for which they sacrificed a large part of the funds destined for furnishing their modest home.

He was very happy. "Since that day when the benediction of God descended upon me, I live in an enchanted calm." The journey was a continual inspiration, and his letters glow with the beauty and wonder of his beloved Italy. As for his personal life, he has all the frankness and innocence of a boy. To him a Christian marriage was "a double sacrifice." Each of the contracting parties gave, he held, not only their best, but their all.

From the moment when he began his new labours in Paris, two things became clear: that he would succeed beyond his hope in the work he had set before himself, and that the effort would before long cost him his life. His position was one of extreme difficulty. Called upon to lecture at the age of twenty-seven, amid the great traditions of the Sorbonne, and side by side with the ablest and most learned men of the day, on subjects demanding the widest erudition, he had to work incessantly in preparation and teaching. But in addition, he had to solve the problem of preaching a Catholic view of the world in the very home of the adverse philosophy and under the control of officials whose sympathies were as anti-Catholic as their power was absolute. He did not hesitate for a moment to avow his beliefs: his pupils even announced that his teaching had converted them. Yet his tact and liberality of thought were so conspicuous, and his personal character so high, that his bitterest opponents respected him. But his zeal was not content with even these absorbing duties. He formed a literary conference of Catholic young men, and presided over it for years. He never refused an invitation to go and speak at meetings of working men, among whom he was always popular. He took a leading part in the development of the new *Cercle Catholique*.

He wrote constantly for the Catholic papers, and always had a large book of his own on hand. Above all, he never failed to spend an ample portion of his time and thought in visiting and caring for his poor.

His work often robbed him of his necessary summer holidays. By August, 1846, his strength was so far undermined that he caught fever, and, having barely escaped with his life, was ordered to take a long holiday. He lived for some years, but in fact he never recovered.

He overworked himself incessantly; but to him it seemed that he could not help it. He too was a missionary. In one of his addresses to the young men who followed him, he asked them if they imagined that God called some to sacrifice their lives in Africa or China, while the rest were to walk about with hands in their pockets and lie down on beds of roses? "Let us be ready," he said, "to show that we too have our battle-field, and that if need be we can die on it." Be it remembered that he never neglected his family life and its relationships, which remained most beautiful to the end. Was he wise or unwise, right or wrong, that he spared himself so little? The effect of his unsparing energy was enormous, even in the few years of his career. That he would have done better if he had lived longer, who can say? He felt that this life was his vocation, and all he asked was to be spent in doing the work of his Master, manfully.

After the dangerous illness in 1846, the doctors insisted on a year's complete rest, and he returned to Italy, where in spite of weakness he busied himself in collecting materials for the great work he was always preparing—that statement of the Christian Civilization in its development or of "the education of the modern world by the Church," through which he hoped to explain Catholicism even to the froward. Amongst other such studies, this holiday produced Ozanam's most characteristic book. It was a charming essay on the early Franciscan Poets, which remains to this day one of the

indispensable authorities for the history of literature, of Catholicism, and of Italy. But when he reached Rome, another interest stirred him to the soul. It was the moment when Pius IX., in the beautiful enthusiasm of his belief in the Italian people, startled the European dynasties by abolishing the traditions of paternal government, and founding a constitutional freedom in Rome. Ozanam's letters are full of the hope and wonder of the time, and as full of devotion to the personal character and charm of the Pope. It was to him the beginning of that which he had always dreamed of, the alliance of the two master forces of Catholicism and liberty. The troubles in which that premature hope was apparently to fail had already begun before he returned to France: but he was not deterred from his conviction. "There is a storm about to break over the Pope," he said; "but let us not fear, as did the men of little faith: for Christ is in the boat and He is not asleep."

As for the policy of the Catholics of France, which was then on the verge of the Revolution of 1848, he boldly called upon the Catholic Club to range itself against the dynastic politicians, and to side frankly with the people. His final cry, "*Passons aux barbares*," evoked a historic controversy. He was bitterly assailed, but he had no idea of retracting. The phrase summed up to him the whole secret of the civilizing mission of the Church. The masses of the people, however untaught and dangerous, were his hope and the Church's opportunity. Their errors, such as they were, were not a reason for despising or for crushing them, but an additional argument for brotherly help. A Catholic politician should be not their enemy, but their friend. "Put yourself, as Pius IX. is trying to do, at the head of all their reasonable movements, and convert them as the Pagan masses were converted long ago, by faith and sympathy and example." He refused to sit in the Assembly, knowing his health would never stand the strain: but in alliance with Lacordaire—who, without his own

knowledge, had been elected—he started the "*Ère Nouvelle*," as a Catholic organ of strong democratic sympathies. "I have always believed," he wrote, when things were at the worst, "in the possibility of Christian democracy: indeed, as far as politics go, I believe in nothing else."

Above all, with a sure instinct, the personal friend of the poor saw that it was the social question to which all men should direct their energies: and on this ground he strove to unite all lovers of the people upon the common basis of a really Christian charity. What he understood by government, he had formulated to a friend long before. Its ideal was "the self-sacrifice of each for the benefit of all." This, he added, "was the Christian Republic of the primitive Church of Jerusalem: and perhaps it may be also that of the end of time." He was always insisting that it was the social question, not the political, which was essential. But he saw that great political changes were inevitable, and he was not afraid of them. In this, as in everything, he believed in God. That the party of Labour should have no excuse to mistake the Church for the hireling or the satellite of the the party of wealth, was his constant anxiety. But he was none the less steadfast, as a moral citizen, for the repression of disorder. He took his share as a National Guard in the unfortunate street fights of the time. When he went on duty he always prepared for death; but he was always calm and always hoping for reconciliation. It was he who persuaded Mgr. Affre to go to the barricades on the mission of peace in which he laid down his life.

Not less terrible than the bloodshed was the widespread distress which followed, when 267,000 individuals in Paris alone were returned as being out of work. Ozanam laboured night and day at the work of St. Vincent de Paul, at his paper, and at his professorship. Probably no man knew the most wretched streets in Paris so well as he. The articles in which he describes as an eye-witness the misery of the slums tingle with a

passionate charity. How he found time to visit and to write as he did, five articles in his examination week, is quite inexplicable. And all the while, in spite of the apparent failure of his policy,—for, in spite of the approbation of the Pope and the Archbishop, the paper was wrecked at last, amid the sterile dissensions and jealousies of the reactionary Catholics,—he continued to belong, as he said, "to the party of hope." *

These efforts, working on his previous ill-health, steadily killed him. He recovered for a while, and paid a holiday visit to the Exhibition of 1851; but the hand of death was on him. In London, the two things which struck him most were the docks, with their vast import of industrial wealth, and the squalid misery of the London poor, whom he constantly visited in company with the English Brothers of his own Society. Southwark and the district around Warwick Street were his chief haunts, and his letters describe his wonder at a wretchedness far worse than anything he had known in Paris or in Rome. To Westminster Abbey he was naturally drawn, though he said of it, with some bitterness, that Protestantism "having banished God out of His house, and being unable to fill it with a living people, has imagined the expedient of cumbering it with the dead." It is related of him that when he first found himself before the tomb of St. Edward, in all simplicity he knelt down to pray, to the great scandal of the other tourists, and the amazed indignation of the verger, who promptly turned him out for improper behaviour in the church.

He returned to Paris, tried once more to teach, broke

* It is worth recording that in the extracts from the '*Ère Nouvelle*,' among his published works, there are to be found not only his vivid discriptions of the social misery and his appeals to all men of good will, but also his testimony to the virtues of the outcasts of society. "In these foul cellars and garrets," he wrote, "we have often come upon the loveliest domestic virtues, and found a refinement and good sense that is not always to be met with under gilded ceilings."

down, and took to his bed. Certain critics said he was too often absent, and a rumour of dissatisfaction reached him. He rose from his sick bed, in spite of all protests, and went to deliver his last lecture. "Our life belongs to you," he said to his students, "to our last breath—and you shall have it." Never did he speak more brilliantly; and his medical brother, who saw him next morning, thought he would be dead in ten days. They carried him to the Pyrenees, and again to Italy. But except that he still broke all restraints for the sake of founding new conferences wherever he went, his work was done. He worked at his book to the very last, when he could not write more than a few lines at a time. He was proposed as a candidate for the *Institut*—the ruling ambition of every Frenchman: but he could not return to Paris for the purpose.

He did not even yet give up hope, but he prepared for death. From his childhood he had loved the Bible above all other books, and had read a portion of the Gospels as his "daily bread." Now his mornings were spent in such reading and in meditation upon it. Being too weak to take notes, he began to dictate some of his thoughts to his wife, whose tender affection was with him always: and the fragments edited after his death form a singularly beautiful '*Livre des Malades*.' Steadily he sought to order his mind to the hard words: "Thy will be done." His young men at the Sorbonne—his long-projected epoch-making book—the needs of Catholic France—the future of his growing Society of Charity—the dear joys of his family life, which he ranked next to his devotion to God—all these pulled at his heart-strings and made it hard for the eager soul to say good-bye. He suffered greatly; and the best anodyne was to have his favourite Psalms recited to him. His whole time indeed was spent with a Bible beside him, and mostly upon a couch wheeled into the open air. To the end, his marriage was a beautiful and a sacred relation: and his simple joy in his only child reveals itself in all his intimate letters. His last walk

was to receive Communion with his wife on the twelfth anniversary of their marriage. In his last will he wrote frankly that he would await her in heaven, "where alone he could repay her the love that she deserved."

In the beginning of September, 1853, he begged to be brought back to France to die, and just lived to reach the port. Having received the last Sacraments, and being reminded by one who stood by of the Divine Judgments, he said simply: "Why should I fear Him? I love Him so much."

He often thought and said that his life had been a failure: but it is by such failures that the salvation of the world is wrought. Its needs are as great now as when the Lyons attorney's clerk first trod the reckless and ribald streets of the *Quartier Latin*. What he did, thousands of young men, each in their measure, could do also. Who will try?

St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

(1568–1591.)

By the Rev. F. Goldie, S.J.

In a time of terrible wars, when the passions excited by the false Reformation were still at red heat, but while the effects of the true Reform were making themselves felt throughout Europe; when St. Pius V. was in the Chair of Peter, and Elizabeth was reigning in England, St. Aloysius was born in his ancestral castle at Castiglione in Lombardy, on March 9th, 1568.

Don Ferrante, his father, was not only Marquis by title, but also the sovereign of his little state. He was besides a gallant soldier.

Aloysius was his eldest child. Our Saint's mother, a lady of high family in Piedmont, had met her husband at the Court of Madrid, when she was maid of honour to the Queen Isabel, who had brought her in her train on coming from France.

The Gonzagas of Castiglione were a junior branch of the historic family which had made so great a name for itself. By inter-marriages they were connected with the Hohenzollerns, the Bourbons, the D'Estes, the house of Aragon, the Guises, the Medici, and all the chief families of Christendom, and Aloysius was himself related to some twenty Cardinals.

The rival powers of France and Spain had made Lombardy in those days the battlefield of their jealousies. Open wars or secret intrigues had necessarily demoralized

the peoples of those lands. The Gonzagas held high positions in the service of Spain and Germany, and were famous alike in court and in camp, and not less so in the field of Arts and Letters. But the taint of the times was on them, and their domestic history bears traces of wild ambitions and strong passions such as were stirring in those days of struggle and contest.

The birth of St. Aloysius was attended with such danger to the mother and child alike, that she vowed a pilgrimage to Loreto, and the babe was baptized almost before it was born.

There seems to have been a special grace about the child from its earliest days, and the mother, who was very pious, and who longed above everything to foster a like spirit in her baby boy, was delighted to notice his fondness for prayer. But the father's pride was to bring up his son to be a soldier like himself, and as he had to drill a large muster of troops enlisted in the service, of the Emperor Charles V. for the expedition of Don John of Austria to Tunis, he took Aloysius away with him, though not then five years old, to the camp. There he was delighted to see his little son marching in the front rank at the reviews in a suit of light armour, and with a diminutive pike upon his shoulder.

Aloysius thoroughly entered into the spirit of the thing, and showed a daring that delighted, though it now and again alarmed, his father. He burnt his face one day while firing off a musket; and on another occasion, at the time of the mid-day siesta, he took some powder from a soldier's pouch, and actually loaded and discharged a small field piece. The report startled the whole camp from its afternoon sleep, and he was very nearly run over by the recoil of the gun.

When the Marquis marched away with his troops, Aloysius was sent home, and it was soon found that the child had picked up from the soldiers a coarse expression of which he did not know the meaning, but by which, on being reprimanded by his tutor, he was so horrified that even when accusing himself in subsequent confessions of the fault, he could not bring himself to repeat the word. This and the theft of the powder

were subjects of his life-long repentance, the only faults of any gravity of which he could accuse himself.

About the age of seven, when reason dawned more fully on his mind, such a wonderful spiritual light came to his soul, with so clear an understanding of the things of God, that he ever spoke of that time as the period of his conversion. Nor in fact did he ever look back in his swift ascent to perfection. He began each day to say long prayers, of which the Gradual and Penitential psalms were but a part; and even though he got one of the wretched fevers so common in the Lombard plain, he would not abandon this pious practice.

When the valour of Don John of Austria had won the day at Tunis, in 1573, Don Ferrante came back to Europe; but he stayed two years at the Court of Spain. On his return home, he found Aloysius completely changed and given up to holy thoughts. The first symptoms had already shown themselves of that terrible scourge of the plague, which during the following year was to devastate Milan, and thus to call forth the devotion of St. Charles Borromeo. The Marquis determined to seek shelter in the deep valleys and richly-wooded hill-sides of the Baths of Lucca. He hoped also there to find relief from gout, as he was a great sufferer, and to leave his sons, Aloysius and Rodolph, at Florence, to acquire the exquisite accent for which that cultured city was so famous. The Grand Duke would have taken the two boys into his palace, but their father was anxious that they should attend to their studies, and only consented that they should go to Court on Sundays and holidays. At the palace, St. Aloysius had, amongst other children as his play-mates, Mary de' Medici, the future Queen and Regent of France. He had to join in their sports and amusements, but he much preferred to build up and decorate little altars out of devotion.

Florence was always dear to our Saint, and he ever after looked upon that bright city as the cradle of his sanctity. He had come across a book by a Spanish Jesuit, a work familiar in old days to the persecuted Catholics of England, on the Rosary; and it filled his

young heart with a high idea of that precious devotion and taught him to know and to love better our dear Lord and His Blessed Mother. In the Church of the Servite Fathers is an ancient painting of the Annunciation, and tradition tells us that an Angel finished the head of our Lady, which it had baffled the skill of the artist to complete. This shrine was an object of much devotion, and Aloysius, who lived not far off, loved to pray before it. Once while at his devotions, St. Aloysius was moved to dedicate his virginity to God by vow, and from that moment he became more like an angel than a man, and never was troubled in mind or body by a shadow of those wild storms which are the heritage of man's fallen nature. The Roman tribunal which examined his case for canonization declared that his innocence was not only rare, but that no like case was recorded.

At his first confession to a Jesuit Father at Florence, Aloysius was so filled with shame at the sight of his sins, and of reverence to the minister of so mighty a grace, that he fainted at the feet of his director, and his tutor had to lead him home dazed and confused. He returned the following day, and made what he called a general confession, and from that time began seriously and steadily to study the defects of his character, with a view to correcting them. He felt the chief source of his faults to be his hot temper and an inclination to speak unkindly of others. But he bridled his strong character with so firm a hand that he never after felt any rebellion, except perhaps when he chanced to be praised. And in order to forestall faults of the tongue, he withdrew as far as possible from society, and though never morose, became as silent as a Carthusian.

After two years at his beloved Florence, Aloysius and his brother were summoned to the brilliant court of his relative the Duke of Mantua. Here a troublesome and dangerous illness obliged him to diet himself very strictly, and he learned to love at that early age a fast worthy of the Fathers of the desert. And when his ailment had departed, he still insisted on continuing an abstinence which seemed to leave little room for his stricter fasts on several days during the week. Meanwhile the

thought of leaving the world was taking clearer shape in his mind, and he fully determined to assign to his younger brother, the headstrong Rodolph, the heirship of his ancestral states. Aloysius kept away from theatricals and fêtes of the Court, and found his delight in reading the Lives of the Saints, by Surio, or talking with holy people whose thoughts ran in the same channel as his own. But his father heard how feeble and thin his son had grown, and sent for him to the bracing and breezy heights of the Castle of Castiglione. It looked down on the spacious precincts of the town, with its open spaces and many gardens and over the intervening hills to the lovely Lake of Garda, 'the bluest of all waters.'

The Marquis was indignant with the boy's tutor at the state of St. Aloysius, but he found that neither he nor even the fond mother could make the child alter his ways. On the contrary, God drew him nearer to himself. Hitherto St. Aloysius had only employed vocal prayer. Now, without human teaching, he learnt the method of meditation. He seemed unable to withdraw himself from its attraction. He spent the greater part of his day shut up in his room; and when the servants peered through the chinks of the door to see what their young master was doing, they saw him on his knees with his eyes fixed on a crucifix, his arms outstretched or crossed on his breast, while he sighed and sobbed as if he had been standing on Calvary, and was witnessing the tortures and death of his Lord and Love. His tears were so constant that not only were his clothes wet by them, but they flowed down on the floor. Even when going about the house he was continually absorbed in prayer.

Just at this time B. Peter Canisius' little work of *Daily Meditations*, which had been published a year or two before in Mantua, fell into his hands, and taught him the time he ought to spend in mental prayer, giving him valuable hints as to how to practise it. He came across another work also, the "Letters from India," three series of which had appeared in Venice. Like our *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, it gave

the reports of the progress of the Church by the Missions of the Society of Jesus in India and America. It fired him with a desire to do what he could for souls. He used to frequent the Sunday School, and there to help to teach the little ones and the ignorant among his father's vassals.

God and the things of God were the only topics of which he cared to speak. Once when his mother took him on a visit to the widowed Duchess of Milan, whose beautiful portrait by Holbein adorns the collection of the Duke of Norfolk, the attendants were amazed at the heavenly wisdom of his remarks, for, as they said, if they had not seen him, they would have thought it was an old man that was speaking.

This year 1580 was specially blessed, because the holy Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles, in making a visitation of the dioceses of his suffragans, came and stopped at Castiglione.

The Cardinal refused the hospitality of the Castle and stayed with the parish priest. There St. Aloysius went to see him, and the two saints soon understood one another. St. Charles found the boy had not, though twelve years old, made his first Communion, and seeing how fit he was, asked to have the privilege to give It to him with his own hands. This he did on July 22. We have no record of the fervour with which the Saint received his Divine Guest, but his devotion to the Mystery of Love ever after tells us how great it must have been. St. Charles bade St. Aloysius farewell by a fatherly and fervent blessing. He had recommended strongly to our Saint the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which had then but lately appeared, and St. Aloysius became so fond of the solid and beautiful instructions it contains that he spoke highly of it in turn to others.

Shortly after, the Marquis, who was at his post at Montferrato, as Governor for the Duke of Mantua, ordered his wife to come and join him with the two boys. As St. Aloysius and Rodolph were crossing a ford of the river Ticino in a flood, the carriage, one of the clumsy vehicles of the period, broke in two, and while the horses dragged the front part safe to shore

with Rodolph who was seated in it, the back part with our Saint and his tutor was swept down the stream. It was providentially stopped by the trunk of a tree, which the torrent had brought down, and drenched and half dead the two were rescued in succession by a man on horseback, who got them off safe. It was at Montferrato, in company with the Barnabite Fathers and the Capuchins, his constant companions, that St. Aloysius's resolve about religious life was finally made. He envied them their freedom from the ties of the world, their joyful hearts, their entire devotion to God and their indifference whether to live or to die. People noticed how more than usually absorbed and abstracted he had become, and his religious friends read in his face what was going on in his mind.

On his return to Castiglione, in 1581, St. Aloysius continued with more rigour than ever his life of penance and prayer. The love of our Lord, as it always does when it is genuine, made him unwilling to live in comfort and without pain. He shunned the bright charcoal fire in the braziers, which are the sole defence against the sharp winter beneath the frozen Alps. Even if forced out of civility to approach, he took care not to enjoy the warmth, and his hands were chapped by the severe cold. When his father took him to see a great review at Milan, he went into a back seat and turned his eyes from the brilliant sight.

In the autumn, Mary of Austria, the daughter of Philip II. of Spain, and widow of the Emperor Maximilian, was returning to her beloved country, and her royal father ordered the princes and nobility of Italy, who were his subjects, to accompany her. Leaving their younger children behind, the Marquis and Marchioness of Castiglione, with Aloysius, Rodolph, and their only daughter, went to meet the imperial party as far as Trent, and accompanied them by Genoa and Marseilles. There our Saint honoured the relics of St. Mary Magdalen.

The Empress and her suite took ship at Marseilles and landed at Collioure on the Spanish coast. They went across the country to the mountain sanctuary of

Our Lady of Montserrat, and to her other shrine almost as famous, of *The Pillar* at Saragossa.

At Madrid St. Aloysius and his brother Rodolph were installed in the palace as pages of honour to the boy prince Diego, heir to all the Spains. Under the guidance of his tutor, St. Aloysius pursued his philosophical studies, natural science, the globes, logic, and the ethics of that marvellous but eccentric genius, Raymond Lull. Aloysius happened to pass through Alcalá when a *public act* or defension of theology was going on under the celebrated Jesuit theologian, Father Gabriel Vasquez, and though but fifteen or sixteen years of age, our Saint was invited to object. He did so with such skill as to give promise of a brilliant future.

But neither the charms of study, nor the splendours of a court, the most punctilious and magnificent in Europe, consoled Aloysius for the inroads made on time which he would have liked to give entirely to God. He found his devotions somewhat chilled by his absorbing duties, and he resolved, without neglecting what he was bound to do, to draw a sharp and definite line, beyond which nothing but absolute duty should compel him to go. He refused to make any calls of mere ceremony, and would neither learn to dance, nor practise gymnastics like his younger brother. He kept so strict a guard over his eyes that though every day that the Empress Mary was in Madrid at the royal Convent of the Discalced Franciscans—she stayed some twenty days in the capital—he accompanied the Infante to make her a formal visit, he never once looked at her, and did not know whether her hair was dark or grey, nor could he have recognised her again. The nobles and gentlemen of the court respected his presence, and never ventured on a light word when he was near. "The little Marquis of Castiglione," they used to say, "is not made of flesh and blood."

The young prince Diego was once standing at a window, and a violent wind annoyed him. "Stop, wind," he pettishly cried, "and do not bother me." St. Aloysius playfully yet seriously reminded his young master that though he was lord of men, he was

"not lord of the wind, which owned no master but their common Creator." But with all Aloysius' gravity and dislike of state or of amusement, the Prince was still very fond of his admonitor.

The Saint, faithful to his resolve, gave himself up with new fervour to his prayers and austerities. A fresh reason made him redouble his endeavours and his supplications. Steadily the conviction had been growing upon him that God wished him to leave the world entirely. Now it had come merely to the question as to what Order to enter. The Society of Jesus had a special attraction for him, because it seemed to bar the way to any ecclesiastical dignities. He was naturally drawn to a life of retirement and external austerity; but his mother assured him that his health would be sure to sink under it and he would be forced to give up the dearest wish of his life.

On the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, 1583, for which he had prepared with special fervour, he was praying after Holy Communion, in the chapel of our Lady in the great Church of the Jesuits at Madrid, now called San Isidro, when suddenly a distinct voice came to him bidding him to enter into the Society of Jesus, and telling him to inform his confessor as soon as possible of what had occurred. That feast is a day specially sacred to the Society, as upon it the first vows of St. Ignatius and his companions were made at Montmartre, and upon it too St. Stanislaus went to his reward in the very year of St. Aloysius' birth. St. Aloysius hastened to his confessor, Father Paterno. The Father was no doubt well aware of his fitness, and that his calm judgment protected him from delusion. He told him however that he must necessarily first receive his father's approval before he could be received. St. Aloysius went to break the news to his mother. She took his side earnestly, and pleaded his cause so strongly with her husband, who was furious at the announcement, that he suspected her of favouring Rodolph and of wishing to supplant Aloysius in the Marquisate.

When his son came himself to speak to Don Ferrante on his own part, the Marquis broke into a violent passion

and drove him out of his sight. He even threatened to have him stripped and flogged for his audacity. St. Aloysius' only reply was: "Would that I could have the privilege to suffer something for God." Don Ferrante sent for Paterno, and vented his rage upon him, accusing him roundly of putting this idea into his son's head, upon whom were centred all the hopes of his family and of his states. The Father succeeded in calming the Marquis and showed him that the boy's life was quite enough to tell anyone which way his thoughts were tending. The Marquis avowed that he would not have made such strong objections to his entering any other Order, because his son could by that means have obtained some dignity in the Church fitting his high birth. But as St. Aloysius assured his father, this was just the very thing he sought to avoid.

It was a weary and long struggle for the Saint. This however winnowed his vocation, and left it pure from any imperfect motive. It proved that it came directly and entirely from God. His father tried to persuade himself that it was a mere passing fancy, and that in opposing his son's wishes he was not opposing the will of God. The little prince Diego had died of small-pox and so Aloysius was now free, but his father, anxious to delay, promised him through his cousin, the Father General of the Friar Minors of the Observance, that he would be at liberty to follow his call, if he would return with him to Italy. People at the court imagined that the whole thing was but a mere scheme of St. Aloysius to scare his father from gambling, a pursuit by which he was impoverishing himself; and they praised his knowledge and tact.

As they were sailing on their return voyage along the coast of Southern France there was an alarm of Turkish pirates, and they were chased by the Bey of Algiers to the very port of Marseilles. St. Aloysius at once exclaimed, "Would that we might be martyred!"

In the July of 1584, St. Aloysius was back again in Castiglione, and hoped soon to be released. But his father said he must first go on a tour of visits to the princes of Northern Italy with his brother Rodolph. He hoped

that a life among brilliant courts would give his son new tastes, and would wean him from his design. But though our Saint won the affection and esteem of all, he only showed more than ever how fixed was his heart in its love of higher things, and in contempt of all the brave gaieties of Florence and Ferrara. He would not even wear the splendid clothes, all heavy with gold embroidery, which the Marquis had ordered for him to appear before the Royal Duchess, Ann of Austria, Infanta of Spain, and wife of the reigning Duke of Savoy. Rodolph had to wear them in his place, and they suited well his fine figure. The journey was spent by St. Aloysius like a pious pilgrimage, in spite of the almost royal honours with which he was received, and of the number of attendants who accompanied him. He found his chief delight in the houses of the Society, paying there always his first visit to his Sacramental Lord. He never omitted either his fasts or exercises of devotion; and at night if he had to stay at an inn, he shut himself up in a room, and before an improvised cross, which he drew with a morsel of charcoal on a piece of paper, he spent a good hour and a half in prayer.

At a house of the relatives of his mother at Turin, an old gentleman dared to begin in presence of St. Aloysius a loose conversation with a number of young men that were there. "How dare you, an aged man of your station of life, speak of such things to these young gentlemen? This is a scandal and evil example," exclaimed the Saint, as he turned on his heel; and taking up a religious book, he went into a room some way off, to show his displeasure.

Another time, when invited to an uncle's house at Chieri in Piedmont, he found a ball had been got up in his honour. He could hardly stay away under the circumstances, but he went into the ball-room upon the express condition that he should not be asked to dance. However he had hardly sat down when a lady came up to him to invite him to be her partner. Aloysius at once rose and left the hall. Some time after, his uncle, who could not find him anywhere, chanced to pass through one of the servants' rooms, and there he noticed

his nephew, hidden between the bed and the wall, absorbed in prayer. On his return to Castiglione, Don Ferrante only made fresh endeavours to turn St. Aloysius from his resolve. Everyone of weight and influence, relatives and strangers, priests and laymen, whom Don Ferrante could enlist in the work, were employed by him, but in vain, to shake his vocation. Aloysius' only weapon was renewed prayer and increased penance.

At last the chance sight of his son disciplining himself to blood wrung a tardy consent from his father, and Aloysius at once used every effort to procure from the Emperor, on whom his states depended, the necessary transfer of the fief to his brother. Meanwhile he went to Milan on some business for his father, who was unable through the gout to see after his affairs. There he astonished everyone by his aptitude and skill. At the same time, he pursued his studies, and used to go to the Jesuit College to attend lectures on science, dressed simply in a cloak, without even a sword, the obligatory mark of gentle birth in those days. In a grand cavalcade during the Carnival, in which all the young men of fashion took part on valuable horses richly caparisoned, accompanied by a large number of attendants, to show how utterly he had given up the world and how he contemned it, he rode through the street where the procession was passing on a miserable old mule and followed by only two servants.

When awaiting orders to return home, his father quite unexpectedly arrived one day in Milan, and, as a last resource, he begged Father Achilles Gagliardi, a Jesuit of great name and the friend of St. Charles Borromeo, to test the vocation of his son. This the Father consented to do, as the Marquis promised him to stand by his decision. His arguments were so powerful and apparently so genuine that Aloysius was somewhat disturbed, for it seemed to him that Gagliardi, whose opinion he so much valued, was opposed to his entering the Society. However our Saint answered so wisely, and so thoroughly, that even his father was forced to admit that the vocation was a true one.

But still the day was not won. Before returning to

Castiglione, Aloysius sought strength and light in a retreat at the Jesuit College at Mantua. When he came home he led the life of a solitary in the castle, so strict was his silence, so severe his fasts, so rigorous his penances. His only director was his fervour, and one of the arguments his mother used to induce the Marquis to give his consent that Aloysius might be allowed to enter religion, was that he would be there protected from his own indiscretion, and his life prolonged; for he had grown so weak that he could hardly stand.

But the Marquis, in answer to the Saint's fresh request, told him plainly that he never would give his consent until his son was twenty-five, and that if he chose to go without his leave, go he might, but he would cease to own him as his son. This was a crushing blow to St. Aloysius; and his first thought was to write to the Father General of the Society and ask his advice. But Don Ferrante pressed him so hard for a reply that he had to act on the spur of the moment. He told his father accordingly that he consented to the delay, but only on two conditions, that he should spend the interval in Rome, and that the Marquis should write to the General at once and declare that he had given his consent. St. Aloysius himself wrote a letter to Father Acquaviva, the General of the Society, to tell him what he had done. That Father could sympathise with the young man, for he himself had left high place to enter the Order. Meanwhile arrangements were being made for the Saint's stay in Rome, in a position fitting his high rank. He openly lamented to his intimate friends that he had not been born a simple peasant boy, for then he would have met with no difficulties, if anxious to become a religious. Suddenly, in the midst of his earnest prayers, Aloysius felt an impulse which he could not resist. He followed it, and entering the room of his father, who was confined to bed with the gout, said to him with the greatest firmness: "Father, I leave myself entirely in your hands, you can do what you like with me; but I tell you positively that God has called me to the Society of Jesus, and in resisting my wishes you are resisting the will of God." Then he left the room without another word.

The Marquis turned his face to the wall, and broke out into such a fit of grief that his sobs and cries could be heard outside. He sent for St. Aloysius. "My son," he said, "you have stabbed me to my heart, for I love you and have always loved you, as you indeed deserve. In you I have put all my hopes and those of our family. But as God calls you, I do not wish to keep you. Go where you please, and I give you my blessing."

St. Aloysius thanked his father, and escaped from the room lest he should increase his grief. He hurried to throw himself on his knees, and thank God for this favour so long delayed. The news soon spread through the town, and all were deeply grieved to lose their good young master. Some ventured to press him to stay and be their prince. "I want," he answered, "to be a prince in Heaven. It is hard for a sovereign to save his soul." As the carriage bore him off to Mantua, the poor people filled the air with loud laments over their loss.

There was weary waiting yet. His mother was at the court of the newly wedded Duchess of Savoy, and all the possible heirs expectant to the Marquisate were, by order of the Emperor, to be present at the solemn renunciation. An additional difficulty was, that by the deed, the Marquis had settled a sum of money on St. Aloysius for his own private use. But this was contrary to the rule of St. Ignatius, and, for fear of invalidating the whole, fresh changes had to be made.

At last, on All Souls' day, 1585, in the vast palace of the Gonzagas, in a hall then bright with the creations of Mantegna, a brilliant family gathering were listening to the long document which transferred the succession irrevocably from Aloysius to his young and hot-blooded brother. Don Ferrante was in tears the whole time, while Aloysius was full of joy. As he signed this act of renunciation, he said to Rodolph, who could not conceal his boyish delight, "Well, brother, which of us is the more pleased? I am sure that it is I."

Next day, he bade good bye to his father and mother, and on his knees begged reverently their blessing, but his heart was too full of joy for any grief to show itself in his face: and on the fourth of November he set out

for Rome with a suite of attendants which his father had provided for him. Rodolph went with him as far as the riverside; there they parted, and the party took boat for Ferrara.

Rumour had gone before as to what he was and what his errand, and the crowds of pilgrims gazed at the young prince, who had made so hard a fight to be poor with Christ. The journey was to him one long prayer, sweetened by penance. At the early dawn, before starting, he made a brief meditation and next recited the day hours of the Divine Office with his chaplain, and the *Itinerarium* or prayers for travellers. He then mounted, and rode on alone, absorbed in thoughts of God, and if ever he called the priest to his side it was only to talk to him on holy things. While the horses baited, he broke his fast, and then said Vespers and Complin, and mounted again. His mind flew off to the rigorous life he hoped to spend in religion, and to lands where dangers and death awaited him in his zeal for souls. Did England and the gibbet of Tyburn come before his mind? It was then ennobled with fresh Martyrs' blood.

When the evening came on sharp and cold, he would never warm himself at the inn fireside, but spent two hours in prayer, and scourged himself as was his wont. After this he said Matins and Lauds; and only then came down to partake of a very poor supper. But for the prohibition of his confessor, he would have continued his regular and constant fasts.

Towards the close of November, Rome appeared to the travellers, not crowned as now by the mighty dome, but suggestive as ever of the devout thoughts which it recalls to the pious millions who have trodden its sacred soil. The party went to the house of the Patriarch, Scipio Gonzaga.

After a short rest, St. Aloysius hastened to the old house, then standing in all its poverty, wherein St. Ignatius and his first companions had lived, and where the holy founder, B. Peter Favre and St. Francis Borgia had died. Father Acquaviva came down to meet him in the garden, and the Saint threw himself at his feet and renewed the offering of himself. The General

raised him up, and kissed him affectionately on the forehead.

On Saturday, November 23, St. Aloysius went to an audience of the Holy Father. As he was waiting in the ante-chamber a crowd of courtiers gathered round him and looked with wonder upon one who turned his back upon wealth and honours. Pope Sixtus V. asked Aloysius if he had weighed well the difficulties and wearisomeness of a religious life, but when the Saint had told him that he had considered the matter thoroughly and for a long time, the Pontiff encouraged him to persevere, and gave him a hearty blessing.

On Monday, the feast of St. Catherine, the Saint with his attendants went up the Quirinal hill to the Noviciate of Sant' Andrea, then fresh with the memories of St. Stanislaus. At the door, St. Aloysius bade good-bye to his faithful household, giving them a message to his father and mother. "What shall we say to Rodolph?" they asked. "He who fears God, will do good," were the Saint's well-timed words. The Patriarch stayed to say Mass and give Holy Communion to his dear relative, and then remained to dine with Father General, who had come there to meet them. When all the guests were gone, and St. Aloysius was led to the room where he was to spend in solitude the first days of his religious life, he burst out into those fitting words: "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it." He then went on his knees and thanked God for the grace which had come at last, and St. Catherine's feast was ever after a marked day in his calendar.

In the early days of his religious life, his father died, and died too, as he had lived since his son's entry into religion, a most exemplary and edifying life. Aloysius, though he wrote a letter of condolence to his mother, so mastered his grief that it seemed as if he had forgotten his father and his father's house.

His novice-master at Sant' Andrea, as at the Gesù, was a man of very signal virtue. To him he unveiled his whole heart, and the very simplicity and humility of Aloysius only made the Father reverence him the more deeply. It fell out that this superior's health broke down, and to

save his life the doctors ordered him to be carried in a litter to Naples, and three of the weakest novices were ordered to keep him company. Of these was George Elphinstone, of good Scottish family, whose uncle had died a saintly death but a short time before as a novice in the Society at Naples; St. Aloysius was another, and as he was the weakest, Father Pescatore, the novice-master, would have him with him in his litter. The Saint tried to evade the luxury, but when ordered to accept it, was delighted to be privileged with the company of one so holy and so learned in the science of the soul, and as the Father poured out his rich seed of spiritual knowledge on so well prepared a soil, Aloysius owned that he learnt more in that journey than in all the noviciate together.

At Naples he had for his companion the Blessed martyr, Charles Spinola, who was to give his life so gloriously for God in far-off Japan, and the memory of St. Aloysius was fresh in his mind during the horrors of his terrible prison at Omura. At Naples as at Rome the thirst for lowliness and suffering was the conspicuous characteristic of the Saint, and God chose to allow him to suffer some unintentional neglect during a long and dangerous attack of erysipelas. He was as radiant and joyous under it as always.

Another six months saw St. Aloysius back in Rome, but this time in the great Roman College, then fresh from the hands of its magnificent builder, Gregory XIII. It was at that time, as it has been with some sad intervals till the taking of Rome in 1870, a sort of Catholic University, where the students of the National Colleges, gathered under the shadow of the Vatican, drank in theology at its fountain head. There came the new recruits for England's conversion, the future martyrs and confessors and controversialists, to whom the venerable College of St. Thomas of the English gave, thanks to the generosity of the Roman Pontiff, what was refused to them at Oxford and Cambridge. And in the lecture rooms of the Roman College, no less than ten, who were to witness by their blood on English scaffolds to the faith delivered by St.

Augustine, sat for some time by the side of St. Aloysius.* And with them was Matthew Kellison, who for 28 years was president of the English College of Douay; Father Blount, the first Provincial of the English Province of the Society, and the well-known Father John Gerard, S.J.

St. Aloysius now began, at the age of 19, his final studies of theology, the queen and mistress of all others. Hardly could he have been under better auspices, for Suarez, Vasquez, and Azor were among his professors. Those who knew him best said that he was to them a loving picture of what St. Thomas of Aquin must have been when young. His piercing intellect, his brilliant memory, his docile respect for his professors' views, his horror of eccentric opinions, were the least remarkable points of the likeness. His burning ardour in prayer, his strict fidelity to his spiritual duties, the constant union of his heart and thoughts with God, his genuine contempt of himself, were still closer traits of resemblance; and above all, the marvellous purity of his soul. So intimate was his union with God, that when asked by his superior, St. Aloysius was forced to own that for six months, the period which the question regarded, the length of all his distractions together would not amount to the space of a *Hail Mary*.

And his prayer only made him more ready to oblige, ever gay and joyful at recreation, though his talk was always of God, ever at the service of any and of all, always anxious to bear another's burden, to serve the sick and poor in the hospitals, or the cook in the College kitchen, and never more pleased than when in poor and old clothes, engaged on lowly and distasteful work.

On St. Catherine's day, 1587, our Saint bound himself still closer to God by his first religious vows; and in the following year, on four successive Sundays, received the four Minor Orders in the Basilica of St. John Lateran. The surplice in which he is represented reminds us of this. A Martyr shared with him this fourfold privilege,

* The Venerable Edward Oldcorne, S.J.; H. Roberts, O.S.B.; Christopher Buxton; Edward Duke; John Ingram; Eustace White, Edward Thwing; Thomas Tichborne; Joseph Lampton and John Thules.

the Maronite Abraham Giorgi, who, in 1605, gave his life for his God on the shores of the Red Sea.

But a rude interruption of our Saint's studies was soon to occur. He was resting for a few days from the heat and toils of Rome with his companions on the green uplands of Frascati, when Ven. Father Bellarmine was sent by the General to bid him to leave at once for Lombardy. His brother Rodolph had been deprived of his rightful succession to the Castle and property of Solferino. His uncle Horace had left it away from him by will to the Duke of Mantua, in spite of imperial law, and the Duke held it by right of might. The impetuous Marquis of Castiglione, impatient of all delay, was determined to try his quarrel by an appeal to arms, and the Duchess of Mantua and Lady Martha, the Marquis' mother, wrote to the Father General to beg him to send Aloysius, as the only hope of staying a fratricidal war.

In a quarter of an hour our Saint was on his way. He travelled in company with a lay brother, and though his delicate health and the urgency of the business required that he should go on horseback, he journeyed in as lowly a way as his superiors would allow. He inspired everyone with reverence; the very ostlers listened to his holy words, and revealed to him the secrets of their souls, nor could they tear themselves away from him. Much against the wish of Aloysius,—his arrival at Castiglione had been announced beforehand,—he was welcomed by ringing of bells, by salutes of artillery, and still more by the loving reverence of prince and people. And he met with similar marks of honour from his uncle Alphonsus, in his town of Castel Goffredo. But he lived with the greatest simplicity in his mother's house, refusing to be treated otherwise than as a poor guest.

Though the Duke of Mantua had steeled his heart to any arguments from others, one hour and a half of conversation with Aloysius made him come to terms and render up the castle of Solferino at once to the Marquis. And in a still more delicate affair was our Saint equally successful. Rodolph had fallen in love with a rich and beautiful girl of his States, had carried her off to his

castle, and married her there. But the marriage was kept a profound secret, as his uncle, Alphonsus, wished him to espouse his daughter. Rodolph feared, as the event proved, lest if he knew of the wedding he should try to transfer his fief from him, the lawful heir, to his own child. St. Aloysius, like the rest of the world, was ignorant of the marriage, and he implored his brother to put an end to a grave scandal. He pressed him so hard that he avowed his marriage. The Saint insisted further that, to remove the scandal, his brother was bound to make the marriage public. He gained even this point, and persuaded Alphonsus and the rest of the Gonzaga family to acknowledge the bride.

Meanwhile the Saint, to his joy, got back to religious life at the great College of the Society,—the Brera of Milan. There he was so fond of sweeping the corridors and dusting down the walls, when any person of distinction happened to go by, that to see Aloysius, broom in hand, was enough to show that some distinguished visitor was in the College. Yet among his own brethren, so clearly did his talents and remarkable capacity for affairs shine forth that he was called the little General; and grave Fathers looked upon him as destined one day to hold high office in his Order. Those who knew best the secrets of his soul found that he had climbed to heights of holiness which are never even dreamt of but by a few.

There came to him while at the Brera a distinct intimation that the next year was to be his last, and that he must in consequence strive to give the finishing touches to his perfection. Just then arrived a letter from the Father General summoning him back to Rome. "If," he said in a letter, on receiving the news, "we have a country on earth, I know of none but Rome." It was a time of terrible famine, of which thousands were dying in the cities and in the country. The horrors of want were increased by the plague of brigands, which burst forth as soon as the stern hand of Sixtus V. was relaxed by death. His companions on the road remarked to St. Aloysius how fortunate for them it was that they had not been born in poverty, and the Saint at once replied,

"How much more fortunate not to have been born among the Turks!"

After visiting the house of Saint Catherine, at Sienna, and approaching Holy Communion in her house, they set out with a large party, gathered together, no doubt, out of fear of the brigands. A storm broke over them, and the river Paglia, which flowed beneath the hills, grew at once to so furious a torrent that some eighteen who attempted to pass were swept away down the stream. Suddenly a man was seen crossing at a spot where never ford was known to be. St. Aloysius urged them to pass over by that way. They did so and in safety; and as they did not meet with the man, they felt sure he must have been the guardian-angel of our Saint.

On reaching Rome, St. Aloysius parted even with his theological notes, as the one thing he had kept and cared for on earth; and he begged for a room which was so dark and small that it was never tenanted before. There he lived more than ever abstracted from the things of earth. He used to say that he feared the dignity and responsibility of the priesthood, and would be glad if God would call him away while yet in His grace. His wish was soon to be granted. A fearful contagion, the child of famine, supervened, and Father Acquaviva opened a hospital for the poor and went to serve there himself. St. Aloysius volunteered for the work. Not content with going about the streets to beg for their support, and writing to his mother, and the Marquis, his brother, he went into the thick of the work, specially revolting as it was, and choosing by preference the most loathsome cases. He undressed, he washed the poor sufferers, put them to bed, brought them their food, and prepared them for death. He found on his way to the hospital, one day, a poor wretch in filthy rags, lying on the ground, stricken by the plague. He raised him up, and gently and tenderly he led him to the hospital. The contagion struck the weary and worn youth, and on March 1st, 1591, he was forced to take to his bed, and within a week he received the last Sacraments, rejoicing that the foresight was verified, and that he was going to God.

His sufferings were to be prolonged as a source of merit to himself and of example to all around. He bound himself by vow, if he did recover, to return to the plague-stricken. He sipped the nauseous drugs given to him, nor did he ever speak to anyone of the terrible bed sores which he had contracted. Now and again he got up, but only to spend a long time in prayer at the foot of a crucifix, or to kneel, as when a child, between the bed and the wall.

An old Father was dying in another part of the house, who was deeply attached to St. Aloysius. He asked the infirmarian to bring the Saint to his bedside, and there he humbly begged him to give him his blessing. This St. Aloysius stiffly refused, and the dying man was able only to extort from him a compromise. A few nights afterwards three times did old Fr. Corbinelli appear to St. Aloysius in his sleep. He strove to make light of these dreams, and even blamed himself for paying any heed to them. No one told him the fact that the Father had died that night. But St. Aloysius had a firm conviction that the departed soul was with God; and he asked Father Bellarmine, his confessor, if there were any who went straight to heaven. The Father was not afraid to tell him, not only that some there are who do so, but that he thought that Aloysius himself would be one of those. In a rapture of delight, the Saint lay awake all that night full of the thoughts of Paradise. The time passed by as a moment, and it was revealed to him then that he would go to his reward on the octave of Corpus Christi.

The news of this revelation got about, and all his brethren were anxious to receive his parting words and to give him their commissions for heaven.

He would not hear a word, since he took to his bed, but of God and of the things of God. He was deeply grateful when anyone would say for him the Penitential Psalms while he gazed upon his crucifix, or if they would read to him some other psalms of his own choice, such as "I rejoiced at the things that are said to me, I go into the house of the Lord," or prayers from St. Anselm or St. Bernard.

He caused two letters to his mother from his sick bed, to be written, and others to three of his special friends in religion, one of whom was his former master of novices. When Father Vincent Bruno, who had special charge of the sick, had told him that his end was near, he begged one of his brothers to join him in a hearty *Te Deum.* His latter hours seemed one long ecstacy, and he kept an indulgenced crucifix for the last three days tightly clasped to his heart.

The morning of the octave day had come, and brought no nearer sign of death; but St. Aloysius said quietly in reply to all good wishes, "I shall die to-night." The morning passed. All the time he had been rapt in prayer. During the day he begged for Viaticum, but the infirmarians rejoined that he had received it once, and it could not be repeated. The new Pope, Gregory XIII., was told of his state by his relations, and during the afternoon, he sent him his blessing. St. Aloysius was so confounded, in his humility, at this mark of honour, that he hid his face in his hands, and the Father who bore the message had to calm his trouble by saying that his Holiness must have heard of his illness by chance. In the evening, a Father and old friend of his, came from Sant' Andrea, and the Saint begged him to intercede with the Rector that he might have the Viaticum. The favour was granted, and with a beaming face he prepared for It by saying the Litany of the Blessed Sacrament. Then his Lord came to give His faithful servant His last embrace. After his Communion, Aloysius bade a long good-bye to each and all present. Just then the Father Provincial arrived to see him; "How fares it, Brother Aloysius?" he playfully enquired. "We are going," was his reply. "And where?" said the Father. "To Heaven." "To Heaven?" asked the Provincial. "If my sins do not stop me, I hope in God's mercy to go there," broke in the dying Saint. The Father turned to those around, and said in a low voice: "Just listen! He talks of going to Heaven, as we should talk of going to Frascati."

As Fr. Cepari, his future biographer, was holding up his wearied head, that he might look upon the crucifix,

the Saint took off his cap out of reverence to his Lord. Night fell and there was no sign of death, so only two or three were allowed to stay with him. One of these was the future Cardinal Bellarmine. "Now, Father," said St. Aloysius at last, "it is time!" And they recited the prayers for a departing soul. But the infirmarian soon dismissed even Father Bellarmine, as he did not think his patient would die that night; and the Saint was left with but two Fathers.

Ever and anon a word or so of Holy Writ came from his lips, or he kissed the crucifix, while the Fathers suggested to him some holy thought. His pains increased, and he would fain have been moved, but his assistants did not dare to do so, and encouraged him to drink bravely the last dregs of the cup. He gazed hard at the cross, and seemed to gather from that look strength to bear and to conquer. Then his speech failed him, and they placed in his chilled hands the lighted candle, the beautiful figure of constant faith; and as he fixed his eyes on the Crucified, and strove to utter the Holy Name, he quietly passed to his reward.

It was between nine and ten on the night of the 20th June, the first vespers of the first Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, the future feast day of the Sacred Heart, and, in the Church's reckoning, the 21st. That frail body, glorified by many miracles, lay some time in a humble tomb in the "Church of the Annunciation" of the Roman College. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, while in a rapture, proclaimed his glory in heaven. God quickly honoured his servant. Paul V., in 1605, declared him Blessed, and his sepulchre was made glorious in the new church of St. Ignatius at Rome. In 1726, Benedict XIII. canonized him on the same day as his brother in religion, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and declared him to be the patron and pattern of all young students. And now, with St. John Berchmans, they form a *triplex funis*, a triple cord, to guard our young against the threefold snare of the World, of the Flesh, and the Devil.

Saint Zita.

A Domestic Servant.

(1218–1278).

BY LADY HERBERT.

It is a sad thing in these days to hear many young women say: "O, I would be anything rather than a servant. Every one looks down upon one so much; and the work is so hard; and one never can do as one likes," &c., &c., &c. Now, as a very good writer has wisely said: "The world, in its estimate of domestic service as of other things, is at variance with the truth, or rather, at variance with the estimate which God has put upon various conditions of life."

The world thinks poverty the greatest of evils. Our Lord says: "Blessed are the poor."

How did He Himself come into the world? In the form of a servant. "I am among you as he that serveth," He said to His disciples; and His whole life was one of poverty, humiliation and obedience. But

that there are some who have understood this and have been ready and eager to follow in His steps will be seen by the following true history of a servant girl, who, owing to her great sanctity, has been canonized by the Church.

Zita was the daughter of very poor parents, agricultural labourers, living at Bozzanillo, a little village situated on a hill called Monte Sagradi, about three hours' ride from Lucca, a large Italian town. The Italian peasants, especially in the north of Italy, are remarkable for their piety. Zita's father and mother came from Lombardy, and though very often they had very little to eat they were happy and contented, and brought up their children in the fear and love of God. Their two elder ones both entered the religious state: the son became a lay brother, and the daughter Margaret, a nun in a Cistercian monastery. Zita, the youngest, was born in 1218, and from a child she was the joy of her mother's heart. She was always obedient, loving, and good, and delighted especially in everything which related to the service of God. In those countries, the Church services are at five or six in the morning, so as to enable the labourers to go to Mass before they begin their work: and little Zita, as soon as she could walk, always accompanied her mother to this early service.

This good woman had little book-learning, but was full of love for God and charity towards her neighbour. If Zita was ever inclined to be idle, her mother had only to say to her, "That would displease God," for the child to rush eagerly to her work. And in the same way, if any little sacrifice were to be made, her mother

had only to remind her that "Our Lord would be pleased" if she did it, or that it would be "in accordance with the Divine Will" for the little girl to hasten to accept it, however painful or distasteful to her the act might be. Her sweetness of manner and her great modesty struck every one who saw her, and her greatest delight was to be able to do some little kindness for the sick or blind in their village.

So her life passed quietly and happily till she was twelve years old, when the increasing poverty of the family compelled her parents to try and find her a situation as a servant. Her father led her sadly enough to Lucca to look for a place, and there found one for her in the house of a gentleman named Fatinelli, who lived in a palace close by the Church of St. Frediano, a former bishop of that city. Here the little girl began her servant's life, and here she stayed for nearly fifty years, in spite of all she had to suffer. For at first, as is often the case, every disagreeable duty was laid upon her. She was poorly fed, had very low wages, and was expected to do more work than any one in the house. Yet she never grumbled or complained. Her habit was to get up very early in the morning, before any one was stirring, to hear Mass in the neighbouring church, which was said at five o'clock; and then returned to her duties and performed them with such diligence and care that no one could possibly find fault with her.

Yet for several years she suffered a continual persecution from her fellow-servants. They laughed at her modesty and simplicity, saying she was a little fool; and her extreme anxiety to fulfil all her duties well they

looked upon as a continual reproach to their own idleness and eye-service. Her master was a man of a very violent temper, and whenever anything went wrong in the house, the other servants always contrived to throw the blame upon Zita. Her mistress also was prejudiced against her, and never gave her a single word of praise or commendation. Unjustly despised and accused, reviled, over-worked and often even beaten, she never repined or lost patience: but always preserved the same sweetness in her countenance and the same meekness and charity in her words and in her heart. Many of us have learned to refrain from angry words when unjustly treated: but few can be found who do not cherish some inward bitterness and who can freely forgive deliberate malice or unkindness.

The only pleasure Zita ever had was, by rigorous self-denial, to be able to give something to the poor who came to her master's door. She would save up her own portion of food and live upon the merest scraps, in order to supply their needs. One day, however, when she had given away all she had put by, a poor man, exhausted with heat and thirst, implored her for some relief. Poor Zita was in despair, when a sudden thought struck her. She seized a copper vessel and filling it with water made the sign of the cross over it, while lifting up her heart in earnest prayer. The man declared afterwards that this water was the sweetest wine he had ever drunk, and the fountain is still pointed out at Lucca and called by her name. Whenever, by some rare chance, she had half an hour to spare, she would spend it in going to see any sick people she knew of in the neighbourhood; and even

when she had nothing to give them, she spoke to them so lovingly and tenderly, that they thought more of her visits than they would have done of the alms of others. In spite of her hard work and multifarious occupations, she was continually united in heart with our Lord, offering up every action of her life, however humble, to Him, and realising His presence everywhere. She stinted herself in clothes as well as food, never buying anything but what was plainest and least expensive, and that not only that she might have more to give away, but also to mortify her self-love. This kind of self-denial was particularly irritating to her fellow-servants, who generally spent all they had on their backs. But she bore their insults and abuse with the same meekness and humility as on all other occasions, and was always ready to do them a kindness and to serve and oblige them in every possible way; so that at last, from very shame, they left her in peace.

In spite of her coarse food and poor clothes, Zita grew up very pretty and with the sweetest expression of countenance. This brought on her the attentions and finally the persecution of one of the men-servants of the house, who pursued her everywhere, till, in despair, she threw herself on her knees before the altar and made a vow of virginity, imploring our Lord to protect and save her. Her prayer was heard, and her tormentor was dismissed, from another cause; so that she was happily freed from his importunities. At last, her wonderful patience, charity and humility disarmed the enmity of the household. Her master and mistress discovered the treasure they had in

their house, and henceforth treated her with the respect and consideration she deserved.

One Christmas eve, when she was preparing to go to the first Mass at dawn, her master spoke to her and advised her not to expose herself to the bitter cold of the Church with its keen draughts and marble pavements, but to say her prayers at home. Finding however that she was bent upon going, he put his own fur cloak round her, only bidding her to be sure and take care of it, not lend it to any one else, but to bring it back safely to him. Zita thanked him over and over again for his kindness, wrapped herself in the cloak, and went to church. The first thing she saw at the church door was a poor man, half naked, his teeth chattering with cold. His feeble appeal for help touched her to the quick. "My brother, what do you want?" she exclaimed. He looked at her with a gentle smile and touched her cloak with his hand. In an instant she took it off and put it on his shoulders, but told him to give it her back when the Mass was over, and that then she would take him to where there was a warm fire. She then went into church and was soon so absorbed in prayer as to be unconscious of all else. As soon as the service was over, however, Zita remembered the cloak and looked for the poor man, but in vain. He had disappeared and the valuable fur cloak with him. She was in great dismay, but there was no help for it; so she made up her mind to return home, confess what she had imprudently done to her master, and trust that our Lord would put it into the beggar's heart to return the cloak. When she came back, Signor Fatinelli was, naturally enough, very angry and reproached her bitterly

for her credulity. She bore his reproaches meekly, and did not attempt to justify herself, only expressing her heartfelt sorrow for what had occurred. But her master could not recover his temper, and all day went on abusing her. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, however, a stranger appeared on the principal staircase of the palace, whose distinguished appearance struck every one who saw him. The fur cloak was in his hands, and in the presence of her master, he returned it to Zita, thanking her for her charity. Zita was overjoyed and was beginning to speak to him when he suddenly disappeared, leaving her and her master in mute astonishment, and subsequently overpowered by the conviction that it was no earthly messenger who had restored the cloak.

But this was not the only occasion on which her simple faith was rewarded by our Lord. A famine the following year caused the greatest distress in that part of the country, and Zita, touched by the misery of those who came to her master's door, began distributing all she could amongst them, and among the rest a quantity of beans which were in a chest near the entrance. Then, suddenly recollecting that she had not asked permission to give them, she was filled with compunction and fear, and prayed that our Lord would avert from her the consequences of her imprudent action. It happened that at that very time Signor Fatinelli came into the hall to measure the quantity of beans he had in store. Zita trembled for the result of the inspection. However, to her great surprise, her master said nothing; and in fact, on opening the great chest it was found to be quite full; our Lord having thus listened to the prayer of His servant and worked a miracle on her behalf.

On a subsequent occasion, at one of the great Feasts of the Church, she had gone to Mass as usual, and after her Communion became so absorbed in prayer, that she altogether forgot the time, and only recollected it when she found that the sun was high in the horizon. It was the morning when it was her duty to bake the bread, and she rushed home, feeling it was almost too late to begin it, and fearing that her master and mistress would be furious, as there was literally no bread in the house. When she got home, she opened the flour chest and there, to her amazement, found all the loaves kneaded and ready to be put into the oven. She timidly went to one of the upper-servants and thanked her for having so kindly done her work for her, accusing herself of the neglect. But the maid said she knew nothing whatever about it and had never touched them. Every one in the house was questioned in vain, and when it came to the ears of her mistress, she gravely said: "It is clear that the angels have done this for Zita, and that this delicious bread was kneaded by no human hand."

Zita's great delight was to pray before the Blessed Sacrament: but she never neglected her domestic duties in consequence. After some years, she was made housekeeper, and it seemed as if the whole tone of the house was then changed. She never allowed the servants to do their work in a slovenly or imperfect manner; but she so encouraged and often shared it with them, that they were perfectly devoted to her and would do anything that she asked. Her voice was low and soft, and she was always ready to help and serve them. If she heard any of them quarrelling or

disputing among one another, she would say; "Come, come, don't make such a noise about a trifle:" or, "It is not like Christians to speak or act so, but rather to be patient and to bear with each other." And she preached more by her own example than by her words, for no one ever had more perfect command over herself. "Her whole life," writes her biographer, "was spent in learning the spirit of meekness and in preserving it, in spite of any amount of provocation." Occasionally when the family went away from home for a short time and she was more free from daily duties, she would make little pilgrimages to the churches and shrines near Lucca, especially if there were a Feast of the Patron Saint or the first Mass of a newly-ordained priest.

On Saturdays, her great delight was to go to the little Church and Convent of St. Angelo, about six miles from Lucca across the river Serchio. One Saturday, when she had been detained at home later than usual by a multitude of little household duties, she still set out, though evening was coming on. A man on horseback who knew her, and who was going to the same place, stopped and said to her: "Do not think of going on to St. Angelo to-night. Darkness will soon be here and you will lose your way, and perhaps perish in crossing the river." But Zita, though she thanked him, continued on her way, simply saying: "Our Lord will take me there safely." The horseman galloped on; but when he arrived opposite the Church, to his amazement, he saw Zita kneeling there at the gate in prayer, having evidently arrived some time before him. "How did you get here before me?" he exclaimed. She looked up

smiling and quickly replied: "As it pleased God, so it has happened."

She had a great devotion to St. Mary Magdalene, and there was a famous church dedicated to her between Lucca and Pisa, which she was bent upon going to see. There happened to be war at that time between the people of those towns, so that no one ventured near this church for fear of being robbed or murdered, but Zita was not deterred by this thought, and having an evening to spare, started off, carrying a candle which she wanted to burn at the shrine of the great penitent saint. It was a good ten miles' walk, and when she got there at night-fall, alone and weary, she found the doors closed and barred and no one to give her a night's shelter. Overcome with fatigue she sat down on the church steps and went to sleep. Meanwhile a violent storm of wind and rain came on, but still she slept and her candle went on burning. When she woke very early in the morning, she found to her amazement the church doors open, and that, though the water covered the steps and road, she herself was quite dry. The parish priest arrived at five o'clock as usual, to say his daily Mass, and was astonished to find the doors open and Zita praying by the altar. No one but himself had the key, so that it was evident that no human hand had opened them.

There was an old crucifix in a niche of the churchyard at St. Frediano's, close to her master's house, which Zita was very fond of visiting, especially after Holy Communion while she made her thanksgiving. She used to meditate before it on the mysteries of the Passion, for which she had a singular devotion. This was in fact the

secret of her love, of her thirst for penance, and of her utter forgetfulness of self. The influence she had over the souls of others was mainly owing to her continual union with God. Speaking little and assiduous in her work, her daily duties never seemed to interfere with her prayer. She offered up every occupation, however humble and insignificant, to Him and thus sanctified every action of her life.

Zita used to tell the young servants in the house how convinced she was that domestic service was the safest and best state they could be in, for their spiritual welfare; that the necessity of penitential labour and submission to the will of others had been of the greatest help to herself; and that the fact that all the necessaries of life were provided for you without the care and anxiety which such things often entail, was an incalculable advantage. "Believe me," she would say, "that labour is enjoined on all of us as a punishment for sin, and we should bless God for placing us in a station where we have the most effectual means of promoting our sanctification."

When, as we have said before, she was made housekeeper and everything was entrusted to her which came into the house, she became most scrupulously careful in point of economy, remembering that she was to give an account to God of everything belonging to her master. She had a perfect horror of those little ways, so common among servants, of taking advantage of their master or mistress' ignorance of household affairs in order to charge more, or make a profit out of business transactions for their own benefit. Anything of the sort found her

inexorable in punishing and stopping, so that knowing full well her own scrupulous honesty, no one dared to indulge in such practices. In the same way, she would never allow the slightest word to be spoken against modesty or religion, and on one occasion insisted on the dismissal of a man who persisted in offending in this manner. Although she was the head of the house, she never allowed herself the least privilege or exemption from work on that account. Her favourite saying was that "Devotion is false if slothful." She was devoted to the children of the house, often helping the nurse in her care of them and sitting up at night if any of them were ill, so as to spare that servant any extra fatigue or annoyance. Children are sharp judges of characters, and their love and admiration for Zita knew no bounds.

One would have fancied that Zita's hard life of prayer and labour would have satisfied her thirst for penance. But it was not so. Besides her continual abstinence and frequent fasts, she hardly ever tasted wine, which is as usual a drink in Italy as beer is in England. She wore a rough cord round her waist near her skin, and rarely slept in her comfortable bed, but on the floor and on bare board. Her face became in consequence very pale and thin; but she was always at fever heat for her duties, and found strength enough for what she wished to do, though people declared she looked more like a disembodied spirit than a woman. She had a great horror of calumny or evil speaking of any kind against others: and if any one was thus blamed in her presence, she zealously took up their cause and always found some excuse for their faults.

We have not spoken of one of her tenderest devotions, which was a child-like love for the Blessed Mother of God: and she was rewarded for this love in many remarkable ways. One evening when she had been on a pilgrimage to a church not far from Pisa, she lost her way, and being exhausted with her long walk, stopped by a fountain to bathe her hands and face and take a little rest. While she was resting there, a lady with a sweet and gentle expression of face came up to her and offered to walk home with her, saying she knew the way and was going in that direction. Zita was delighted, especially when her new companion began talking to her of heavenly things in a way which made her forget all her fatigue. Between Massa and Lucca they had to cross the river Ozorio by a fortified bridge, and when they reached it the gate was closed. But in an instant it opened of its own accord, and closed again after they had passed. Thus they arrived at the door of the Fatinelli Palace; but when Zita turned round to beg her companion to come in with her and rest, the lady had vanished, leaving her marvelling as to who could have been her companion.

In 1841 two travellers were going along that same road on foot and came to a way-side shrine on which was this inscription "Sta. Zita; ora pro nobis;" a peasant girl who was standing by, pulled aside some branches which concealed a fountain behind the shrine, and said: "This is the fountain of St. Zita. The waters cure diseases, because she drank of it one night returning from a pilgrimage and met our Lady, who walked home with her. She was a great saint, and she protects our

villages, so that we always come to her Mass, which is said here every week." Thus, what Zita's humility carefully concealed at the time, the voice of the people has declared to be true—as this incident was included in the proof of her canonization.

A few more words will complete the picture of this simple and holy life. Her biographer, who wrote her history soon after her death, and who knew her intimately, says:—"She took the greatest pains to preserve the treasure of her innocence by self-denial of all kinds and by the strictest custody of her senses. She especially closed her ears against light and foolish conversation which often fills the mind with dangerous thoughts and images. She never allowed the smallest familiarity with the other sex, and in fact no one dared take any liberty with her. Her humility was the guardian of all her other virtues: her study was to appear little in the sight of men, and so she would often speak frankly of her faults to her fellow-servants and ask their pardon if she had vexed or offended them. A word of praise seemed to wound her more than a reproach. Her humility was well represented by her clasped hands—a favourite attitude of her's when not at work."

Thus she lived an ordinary life in the eyes of the world, but a supernatural one in the view of the angels, until she was sixty years old. Then she was attacked by a low fever, which lasted for several days before she could be persuaded to take to her bed. At last she felt that her end was at hand and asked for and at once obtained all the last sacraments, which she received with full consciousness and extraordinary fervour. The whole

household were in sorrow and dismay at the idea of her death. But not a trace of anxiety or alarm could be seen on her face. With a smile on her lips and her hands clasped, while her eyes looked upwards, she passed away at three o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, April 27, 1278. No sooner had she expired than a brilliant light was seen above the house, and all the people seeing it, ran to the Palazzo Fatinelli, crying out: "The Saint is dead!" and imploring to pray by her body and to touch it with their rosaries and crucifixes. Her funeral was attended by all the inhabitants of Lucca, and many miraculous cures took place at the same time, which so greatly increased the fervour and devotion of the crowd, that the Canons of St. Frediano had to use force to lay her body in a stone coffin and bury it within their precincts. A succession of miracles followed, so that only four years after her death, the Bishop allowed her tomb to be exposed to public veneration. This tomb was opened three separate times—in 1446, 1581, and 1652, and the body was found intact and in perfect preservation. The same thing happened in 1811, as the Bollandists have recorded in their "Acta Sanctorum."

Within forty years of her death, all Italy looked upon her as a Saint, and Dante gave her the title in his *Divina Commedia.* Leo X. in a bull dated April 11, 1550, granted permission to the Canons of St. Frediano's at Lucca to recite the office of St. Zita on the 27th of April, with the double rite, a privilege which he extended afterwards to all the inhabitants of the city. She was beatified by Innocent XII. in 1696, and Benedict XIV.

referred to her case as an exceptional one of rapid canonization.

Such was the life and such was the glorious death of the humble Zita. Christian servants! with such an example before you, can you be sad or discouraged? Zita had the same trials, the same difficulties, the same troubles as yourselves. Ill-tempered employers, harsh treatment, unreasonable orders, quarrelsome and unkind fellow-servants, overwork, fatigue, weariness of mind and body—all these she experienced. All these tried her virtue as now they try yours. But the thought of Jesus in His Passion calmed her irritation. Prayer and Holy Communion, and the constant realization of His Presence, sustained her through it all.

You have the same means of grace that Zita had: the lowliest, the most ill-used, the most depressed among you may at any moment make known your trials, your wants, your sorrows, to the loving and Adorable Heart of Jesus. Let Zita's example rouse you to greater courage, to brighter hopes. The busiest life may be a life of prayer. Perpetual toil need bring no hindrance to the union of our hearts with God. Your state of life, if you would only believe it, is full of help and consolation. Never forget that Jesus Christ of His own free will and choice, and for your sakes, became as a servant "obedient unto death," and will you not be willing to walk after Him on the Royal road of the Cross, so as to reign with Him for ever in Heaven?

Sœur Rosalie,

A Sister of Charity.

(1787-1856).

By Lady Herbert.

Who does not love the Sisters of Charity? The sick in their poor homes, the little children in the schools, the wounded soldier on the battle-field, the dying man in the hospital—all turn to the grey gown and white head-dress of the good Sisters for loving sympathy and ready help, and untiring devotion to their needs. Thousands of lives might be written of these voluntary victims of the highest kind of charity. Endless have been their martyrdoms on the missions, in the fever wards, in camp, during outbreaks of cholera, or from over-fatigue in the slums of our big towns. But we have chosen a life spent in what might be called thorough obscurity in the poor dirty streets of the most wretched quarter of a large city, from which she never stirred. For such a life is one we all can follow: and it was in the daily and hourly performance of humble and often distasteful and painful duties, that she won the love of all and finally gained her crown.

Jeanne Marie Rendu (in religion Sœur Rosalie) was

born on the 8th of September, 1787, at Comfort, a little town in the country of Gex, under the shadow of the Jura Mountains, now called the Department of Ain. Her family belonged to the middle-class, and were in comfortable circumstances: but Jeanne, who was the eldest of three little sisters, was brought up by her mother Anne Laracine, her father having died early. Faith in that quiet country place had remained firm and strong. The manners of the people were simple and kind: hospitality was exercised in a sort of patriarchal fashion: there were no great riches, but no poverty; and even the most well-to-do people would send their children to tend their flocks in the mountains, fetch water from the streams, and perform other domestic duties, with which no false pride interfered; while they associated God in each of their daily works, and made their morning offering of all their thoughts, words and deeds to His honour and glory.

In this healthy pious atmosphere Jeanne was brought up. She was a lively, pretty child, full of fun and mischief, fond of teasing her sisters by throwing their dolls over the garden wall, and fonder of chasing butterflies than of her books. But the one passion of her life, even as a little child, was the poor. If she met a poor man on the road, she would take his hand, lead him to the house and, if she could find nothing for him to eat, would share her little dinner with him, or give him the few pence which were in her purse. She was equally careful of the servants or workmen about the place, always trying, in her childish way, to save them trouble and spare them fatigue.

When she was only seven years old, the terrible French Revolution broke out. Any one who sheltered a priest, or had Mass secretly said in his house, was punished with death. Nevertheless Jeanne's mother braved the danger, and received the Bishop of Annecy in her home, under the disguise of a servant. Little Jeanne was thought too young to be admitted into the

secret: but she remarked that this pretended servant was treated with extraordinary consideration whenever they were alone, and that the best place and the best dishes were reserved for him: so that one day she exclaimed in a fit of childish petulance: "Take care! I shall tell that Peter is not Peter!" Such a revelation would have brought about the death not only of the Bishop, but of those who had sheltered him: so that it was thought wiser to explain the whole matter to the child, with the reasons for the concealment. The poor child understood but too well the necessity of holding her tongue, all the more as her cousin, the Mayor of Annecy, was shot in the public square, a few days later, because he would not profane or burn the relics of St. Francis of Sales.

The Curé of the place would not desert his flock in their extremity, but went about the country in disguise, administering the Sacraments and saying Mass in caves and forests. He taught Jeanne her catechism, and it was at his hands that she received her First Communion in a dark cave, where they scarcely dared light even one candle. But before that poor Altar was a priest preparing for martyrdom, and a child, who, receiving her God for the first time, then and there swore in her heart to serve Him faithfully during her whole life, in the persons of His sick and suffering members.

When the persecution had ceased, Jeanne was sent by her mother to Gex for two years to complete her education in the Ursuline Convent there. All that she had seen and gone through during those years of terror had matured and strengthened her character; and she was so pious and so recollected that the nuns looked upon her more as a novice than a scholar. But this Order was not the one to which she was called. She wanted active service among the poor, and obtained her mother's leave to spend a little time in the hospital at Gex, that she might help the Sisters in the care of the sick. The only person to whom she opened her whole heart at this

time was M. de Varicourt, the Curé of Gex, afterwards Bishop of Orleans, who encouraged her in all her holy aspirations. One day a great friend of hers, Mdlle. Jacquinot, announced to her that she was going to enter the community of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at Paris, which had been recently re-established in France by the First Consul. On hearing this, all hesitation on Jeanne's part vanished: she went to her mother, told her how long she had been cherishing this vocation, and implored her consent and benediction. Madame Rendu did her best to shake her resolution, but in vain: and finally consented to let her go, believing that the illusion would soon be dispelled, and that she would return to her home more satisfied after having made the trial.

So the two friends started. The poor mother's heart failed her sadly at the last, and she exclaimed as Jeanne got into the diligence: "Turn to my side, my child, and let me look at you once more!" Was it a presentiment that they should only meet once again on this side of the grave? Jeanne felt it dreadfully also: for in spite of her strong vocation, she adored her mother, and her nature was eminently loving and sensitive. All her life-long she felt immense pain at parting with those she loved. Her charity in no way displaced her affection—it only increased her power of loving and of suffering for those who were dear to her.

The journey of the two girls was uneventful: and on the 25th of May, 1802, they knocked at the door of the Seminary of St. Vincent de Paul, and began their new and arduous life. Jeanne, however, did not stay very long at the mother-house. Delicate in constitution and very sensitive, both physically and morally, she suffered a great deal during her noviciate. Every one of her duties, which she undertook with her usual ardour, cost her a violent struggle with her natural inclinations, and the result of it was, that she fell dangerously ill, and was sent for change of air to Sister Tardy, who had a house in the Faubourg St. Marceau. Jeanne was then sixteen

and a half, and soon became the favourite of the whole community; she went even beyond her duty, and showed an ability and an activity which no labour seemed to weary. When her noviciate was at an end, the Sister Superior said to the Mother General: "I am delighted with that little Rendu. Give her the habit and let her come back to me." Jeanne accordingly made her profession at the mother-house, received the name of "Sœur Rosalie," and then returned to the Faubourg St. Marceau for good.

The municipality of Paris has done a great deal during this century in widening the streets and carrying out sanitary improvements: but the Faubourg St. Marceau is still a part of the town where poverty and suffering are seen in their most hideous shapes. In 1802, however, it was far worse. In those crooked streets and tumble-down houses, whole families were crowded in damp, low rooms, sleeping on straw, without air, light, warmth or food. Not a child could read: neither men nor women went near a church, nor even remembered their prayers. Everything had to be begun again, but the prospect did not dismay or dishearten Sœur Rosalie. Yet she had no resources with which to meet all this misery. A stranger herself in Paris, there were no rich people to whom she could appeal for help, and besides, the late Revolution had reduced all to a dead level of poverty.

The first thing was to establish what was called a *bureau de bienfaisance:* that is, a committee composed of all the principal inhabitants of each parish, whose business was to direct the expenditure of the money allowed by the State for the relief of the poor; while giving their own services gratuitously, to employ the Sisters to hunt out the most distressed cases, and to bring them before them, while the sick were nursed in hospitals under the Sisters' care. The house in the Faubourg St. Marceau was chosen as one of four others to be devoted to this work. A

dispensary was attached to it; a free school for children and a depôt for clothes and linen for the most indigent.

So Sœur Rosalie began her work: and the Committee very soon found out her extraordinary prudence, intelligence and capacity. To all their questions she gave satisfactory answers; each difficulty found a solution at her hands; the money confided to her for distribution seemed to multiply in her fingers: and as she always gave *them* the credit for the good done, she soon became their friend as well as their counsellor. When at only 28 years of age she was named Superior, the whole quarter celebrated her nomination as a feast day; and the Committee, to testify their joy, gave her a complete trousseau, which she managed with such economy that she was wearing part of it at the moment of her death.

When the Revolution of 1830 changed the Committee, many new members were admitted who were hostile to the sisters, and wished to diminish their influence. Sœur Rosalie was not troubled at the change; she went on just the same, and placed all her time and experience at their service. Their mistrust could not resist this abnegation of every moment, and her sweetness and gentleness triumphed over all their preconceived prejudices. Under all the different authorities to which she had to submit, Sœur Rosalie was always, in the eyes of the poor, the real representative of all the good which was done in the Faubourg St. Marceau. In her strong Christian faith she found inexhaustible treasures of courage and consolation. Inspiring in the hearts of her poor, feelings of hope and resignation, she was able to soften their bitterness and soothe their sorrows more effectually than others did with even abundant alms: and so the bread and coal and meat tickets of the Committee were doubly blessed by passing through her hands.

From her constant intercourse with the poor, Sœur Rosalie learned to know them thoroughly; she never

needed to try and gain their confidence, they came to her instinctively and opened their whole hearts to her. She was never angry or disgusted at the revelations made to her of this or that act of sin or depravity; but, by her patience and compassion, strove to awake better feelings in those poor souls, and make them see the evil and abhor the crimes of their past lives. Sometimes, however, her efforts were met by insults and injuries. She was never either astonished or indignant, but waited for a more favourable opportunity—an illness or a sorrow, which never failed to bring about a triumph for her zeal and love of souls. She often renewed in Paris the wonders of foreign missions, getting hold of entire families, baptizing fathers and mothers, bringing them to make their First Communions; and in many cases to marry; teaching their little ones, or tending them on their deathbeds. She never would refuse to see any of them, even when she was herself seriously ill.

On one occasion, when the doctor had strictly forbidden her being disturbed, a Sister refused admittance to a poor man, who became furious and vented his anger in bitter words. Sœur Rosalie heard him, came down at once, listened to his story, and promised him help; after which she gently scolded the Sister for not having told her at once of his visit. When this Sister pleaded the doctor's orders, Sœur Rosalie replied: "My dear child! let the doctor do his duty and we will do ours. Write at once for that poor man, and in future always let me know when anyone comes."

"But, Sister!" exclaimed the other. "The man was so angry, so impertinent."

"Ah! my dear child, that poor man has got other things to do than to study good manners. One must not be surprised at a sharp word, nor mind a rough manner. There is a great deal more good among poor people than we imagine."

The result of this way of looking upon them was

that the whole population of the parish flocked to the good Sister whenever they were in any trouble or difficulty. They confided to her their sorrows, their needs, their grievances, their secrets. Her heart was their refuge, her conscience their light, her house their home. When all the world turned against them, when they were out of work, when their little goods were seized for rent, when a son or a daughter had misbehaved and left home, to Sœur Rosalie they flew at once. She would give them bread, speak to the master who could employ them, soften the hearts even of the bailiffs, bring back the erring children—pour upon all, in fact, the oil of her loving charity. But it was in sickness or by deathbeds that she was most admirable. No sooner did she hear that any of her poor were ill, than she hastened to their bedside, interested the doctor in their case, procured for them all the little comforts their state required, and by her very presence often worked marvellous cures. When they were convalescent, every little delicacy or comfort which she could devise was at their disposal, and when recovery was certain, the whole family would flock to church to thank God and the angel Sister whom He had sent to them. If the reverse was the case, the good Sister redoubled her cares, and had the gift of finding the words and thoughts which soothed their deathbed agony, and filled their hearts with confidence and hope. Sometimes no immediate fruit seemed to be produced, but she was never discouraged.

In one of the worst streets of the parish lived an old rag-picker who had abandoned his wife, and who led a bad and scandalous life, but he had sent his little girl to the Sisters' school. Feeling that his end was at hand, he sent for Sœur Rosalie. "Sister," he exclaimed, "I am dying, and I want to give you the money I have saved for my daughter." "But this is a lawyer's business," replied Sœur Rosalie. "I will send you one." "No no!" retorted the dying man. "I won't have

anything to say to lawyers; my only confidence is in you. Take my money, so that I may die in peace as regards my child's future fate."

The Sister undertook the trust, and then began talking to him about his soul, and tried to induce him to see a priest and make his peace with God.

"I don't want a priest," he exclaimed; "you are here, and no one can speak to me of God better than you." By degrees, however, she persuaded him to receive the priest, to make his confession, and to reconcile himself with his wife: so that he died in peace, thanking and blessing God Who had put it into his heart to send for Sœur Rosalie before it was too late.

It would be impossible to enumerate the number of works started by her for the benefit of her poor. First in importance were the schools: but she insisted on a simple serious Christian education, fitted for children of the working classes; and set her face against the higher studies in literature, music, and the like, which she always felt unfitted them for their poor homes. She insisted, for the girls, on good needlework and on industrial training of all sorts, with good reading and writing and simple arithmetic, but nothing more. People were surprised at the modesty, reserve and refined manners of her children, while a spirit of piety, order, and brightness pervaded her schools. She opened fresh class-rooms in different parts of the parish, and what are called in France "salles d'asile" for little children, who would otherwise be running wild in the streets.

Then she started a "crêche" for the babies of those who were obliged to go out to work during the day; and in answer to certain objections said: "Why do you reproach the poor with neglecting their maternal duties, when women of a higher class, who have not to earn their bread, leave their children often for weeks and months together to nurses, without being blamed by any one?"

Another favourite work of hers was the "Patron-

age" for young girls employed in workshops, and by dressmakers during the week, and who came on Sundays to spend the day with the Sisters; after their religious duties, innocent recreation was provided for them, with plentiful meals, and the loving counsel of the good Sister in all their little difficulties and troubles. Finally, she enrolled them in a little congregation, under the protection of "Our Lady of Good Counsel," and encouraged the older ones to look after the younger, and to help the Sisters in many little works of charity. One would go and read to a blind or old person; another would take a meal to the sick; two young washerwomen undertook to mend and wash during the week the clothes of a poor old woman, and bring them back to her on the Sunday, and so on. In the evening, the girls would give an account to Sœur Rosalie of all the little works of charity they had been able to accomplish, and were sure of a loving word of praise and encouragement from her. This patronage work was then unheard of in Paris; but now has been extended to every part of the town. The creation of it is entirely due to Sœur Rosalie.

Another form of charity in which she was deeply interested, was the care of the old and infirm. The "Little Sisters of the Poor" had not then been founded, and there was no resource for the old and despised workman but the precarious charity of neighbours or of individuals. Sœur Rosalie opened a house in the Rue Pascal to receive these poor people, furnished it very simply, but with sufficient room for their tools; so that those who could still work a little, should be able to follow their trade and contribute a small sum towards the expenses of the house. Her vigilant charity never relaxed her efforts to cheer and console their declining years, and to prepare them for the last great change. Thanks to her tenderness and care, those who had led the most careless lives were roused to think of higher things, and the old workmen's home became to many, the gate of Heaven. "I should die quite happily," she often said in

her last illness, "if I could be sure that my poor old men would never be turned out of their home." This wish was fulfilled after her death, and on the 1st of October, 1856, private and public charity raised this house as a permanent memorial of its holy Foundress.

It was not only her own works and her own parish which absorbed Sœur Rosalie's interest. She never refused whatever help she could give to anyone; would listen to the tale of each with infinite patience, and always, somehow or other, found means to assist each according to his or her need. People came to her from every part of Paris for advice, for assistance, for interest with the Government or with individuals, for employment of all kinds, and none ever failed to obtain the needed help.

But her charity never degenerated into weakness. She knew how to be severe with those who traded on charity, and detected a false story in a moment. She knew also how to turn every one to account for the service of her poor, and asked of all, what each could do best in their interest. One would write letters; another could visit a distant case of distress; a third would use his medical science on their behalf; a fourth would interest such or such a person to give employment, and so on. Her great delight was to employ the young men and women who came to her in such works, which taught them how to give personal service, even if they had naught else, and to save their own souls by looking after others. Nothing made her so angry as to hear people abusing the faults of the poor; she would say: "If we had passed through their trials, if our childhood had been spent like theirs, and exposed to every evil and corrupt influence, should we not have been infinitely worse?" Men of every class, and some of the highest rank, came to her for advice. Bishops and priests flocked into her little parlour to submit difficult cases to her judgment, and always reaped benefit by following her advice.

The authority and ascendency which she exercised over those with whom she came in contact, was so well known, that what would appear impossible services were asked of her. In 1814, during the foreign occùpation of Paris, one of the soldiers had been condemned to death for some slight breach of discipline. Sœur Rosalie flew to the Russian camp, and begged to speak to the General; throwing herself at his feet, she pleaded for the man's pardon. "You know him well then and care for him?" exclaimed the officer. "Yes," replied the Sister; "I love him as a brother for whom our Lord gave His Precious Blood, and I am ready to give my life for his." The General was so touched at her earnestness that he at once granted her petition, and Sœur Rosalie had the joy of returning home and telling the broken-hearted mother that her son was saved. Another, who had paid a man to take his place as a substitute at the conscription, was cheated by him, and consequently summoned to perform his military service. This would have ruined the whole family, who depended on his earnings. Sœur Rosalie hastened to the War Office, explained the whole circumstances, and obtained his discharge.

Hundreds of like instances might be cited did space allow, where homes were saved and souls rescued from sin and misery by her untiring zeal and indefatigable charity. The greater portion of the works which are now established institutions in Paris and elsewhere, were inaugurated or suggested by Sœur Rosalie—the resurrection of the lay Society of St. Vincent de Paul to visit the poor in their own homes, the opening of soup kitchens, the creation of the Society of St. Francis Regis, and of that which is called, "Les Dames du Calvaire," for tending cancer and other incurable cases—all these and many others owed their existence to her. Like St. Vincent de Paul himself, she sympathised with every religious congregation. Large-hearted and large-minded, it never

occurred to her to consider whether such or such a new foundation might diminish the resources needed for her own works. The consequence was, that every fresh congregation which arrived in Paris turned to her for advice and assistance. She welcomed with delight the first "Little Sisters of the Poor;" sent them beds and kitchen utensils, and begged for them in every direction. The Augustinians, who came in 1827, were indebted to her for their first dinner; and in remembrance of that fact, the anniversary of that dinner is yearly kept by the Community. The Sisters of the Cross found a like welcome also, with a multitude of other Religious Orders.

Politics, which so often divide even good people, had no place in Sœur Rosalie's little parlour. She had to deal with representatives of all the many Governments in France during her sixty years' labour, and all contributed in turn to the one object of her life—the relief of the poor. Charles X. treated her with Royal liberality: and though the Revolution of 1830 diminished her resources, yet Queen Marie Amélie never refused her appeals for help. General Cavaignac came often to see her, and to thank her for her beneficent influence over the people during the February struggles. On the 18th March, 1854, she was visited by Napoleon III. who, greatly to her humiliation, insisted on her accepting the great Cross of the Legion of Honour. The poor people, however, were delighted at this recognition of her services, though she never would wear the decoration. The Empress, at her entreaty, placed her new Orphanage under the care of the Sisters of Charity, which was originally intended to be under lay administration. Previously to that time, she had strenuously opposed the revolutionary movements which in 1830 and 1848 had deluged Paris with blood. The most violent among the mob would yield to the voice of Sœur Rosalie. Her house became then an asylum for all those whom a share in these political troubles had placed in danger. On one occasion she had contrived the escape of a man

thus compromised, and the Prefect of Police ordered her arrest in consequence. His agents warned him that such a proceeding would bring about a Revolution in the whole quarter, and that there was not a man who would not take up arms for "*The Mother of the Poor.*" "This Sister must be an extraordinary woman!" exclaimed the Prefect. "I will go and see her myself." He went, found her little parlour full of poor as usual, waited his turn, and then indignantly reproached her for the escape of the officer in question, asking her how she dared thus act in disobedience to the law? "Sir," she replied, "I am a Sister of Charity. I work under no political flag. I come to the rescue of every one who is in trouble; it is not my business to judge them: and I promise you, if the day comes when you are yourself pursued and seeking an asylum, that it will not be refused to you." The Prefect could not but be touched at her words, and feel their truth in those revolutionary days; and they parted the best of friends.

Not long after, she gave proof of her words by saving a police agent from the fury of the mob: and a little later, an officer of the Guard owed his life to her courage. He had sprung on a barricade of Rue Mouffetard at the angle of the street where Sœur Rosalie lived, when a murderous fire from the insurgents swept off the soldiers who were following him, and left him alone to face the foe. His only chance of escape was to fly to the house of the Sisters of Charity. The insurgents rushed after him furiously, and demanded his life. Sœur Rosalie, after vainly interceding for him with his would-be murderers, threw herself on her knees before them, and exclaimed: "For fifty years I have consecrated my whole life to you. By all the good I have done to you, to your wives and to your children, I ask for the life of this man!" At these words the men fell back, some even cheered her, and the officer was saved.

In the same way, when the cholera made its appearance for the first time in Paris, the people, blinded by

fear, imagined that the doctors were the cause of the mortality; and one especially, Dr. Roger Collard, who was taking a sick man on a litter to the hospital, was surrounded by a threatening mob calling him "Murderer!" and "Poisoner!" In vain he tried to argue with them; his position became perilous in the extreme, when, all of a sudden, he cried out: "But I am the friend of Sœur Rosalie!" "Ah! that is a different matter!" the men exclaimed, and at once took off their hats and let him pass. What Sœur Rosalie was, during those weeks of anguish and suffering, was never forgotten by the people. She seemed ubiquitous, and to be able to live without either rest or sleep. In one day one hundred and fifty deaths took place in that single parish; yet she never lost heart or courage. When the plague was over, orphans without end were left on her hands, and thanks to the charity of a great friend of hers, Madame Mallet, a home was opened for them in which eighty children were received the first day, and which became one of the most flourishing of her many institutions.

What was the secret of her wonderful influence? Her extraordinary success? It was her intense love and sympathy for the poor, in whom she recognised the suffering members of her Lord. She was a very model of self-abnegation, of supernatural devotedness, and of an almost inconceivable humility; when things failed, she always attributed it to her own fault; when they succeeded, she always contrived to give the credit to some one else. One day, some one having implored her to take care of her health, as no one could replace her, she exclaimed: "What nonsense you are talking! I am like an old and cracked pane of glass, which, when broken, will be replaced very quickly by one infinitely stronger and better." Sometimes she received abusive letters from men whose infamous conduct had deserved her reproaches. "Those people know me better than you do," she would say to those who expressed their

indignation: "they have only described me as I am." She was so afraid of showing any impatience or want of consideration towards the poor, in spite of their importunity, that often she would say to the Sisters: "I am afraid I was not kind to that poor man, that I was wanting in sweetness and gentleness towards him;" while the Sisters had been marvelling at her patience and forbearance! The thought of her poor people never left her. If she had seen any case of unusual misery in her daily rounds, she could not eat when she came home. "Something seems to choke me," she would say, while putting away her napkin. "It is the thought that those poor creatures are literally in want of food." She never hesitated to sacrifice everything to the service of the sick—often, in spite of her deep piety, she would beg the Sisters to leave the chapel with her to attend to a dying case. "Let us learn," she would say, "like our holy Patron, to leave God for His suffering members, and our hour of prayer for the poor."

During her fifty years' residence in Paris, she had never seen any of its beautiful parks or monuments; only twice did she consent to leave her parish, one day to obey the order of the Mother General, who wanted her to accompany her to Versailles: and another time to Orleans, to see Mgr. de Varicourt, on some business, and that for only one night. Her wealth of tenderness was showered upon her Sisters, towards whom she was a real mother, and whom she would train in all the most perfect virtues of a Sister of Charity more by her example than by anything else. "Love if you would be loved," she would say. "And if you have nothing to give, give yourselves." When any of them were ill, she was indefatigable in her care of them. If the illness became dangerous, she would spend every spare moment at their bedside, while she was inconsolable if God called one of them to Himself. One day she accused herself to a noted ecclesiastic for her too great affection for her Sisters, and her terror lest she should lose any of them.

"Be comforted, Sister," he replied. "If you did not shed so many tears over your Sisters, you would not love your poor so much!"

Yet she would not pass over any infraction of the rule or any shrinking from duty. One of the Sisters having obeyed with reluctance some trifling order, she said gently: "I am afraid our Lord will not be pleased with you to-day, my dear Sister! I saw it in your face." Or if one of them showed impatience, she would say: "Your good angel could not follow you just now!" To another, who had delayed writing a letter for a poor person, she exclaimed: "Come, my dear Sister, your angel guardian is holding a pen for you. You would not like to make him wait!" One of the sisters having complained of the work she had as porteress, and the loss of time involved by the slowness of the poor, she replied: "When the bell rings, my child, make an act of faith in the presence of God, in the poor man who comes to our door; and then you will not complain of the time passed in His service." One of her favourite sayings was: "To prevent our falling, we must rest on two crutches: confidence in God and distrust of ourselves. But when we have unhappily fallen, we must do like the little children who stumble and cry and then look at their mother, and console themselves by getting up again and going on more bravely. We should have the hearts of children for God, of mothers for our neighbours, and of judges for ourselves."

"Beware of any movement of pride," she would say to her Sisters. "One little grain of self-complacency is enough to destroy the merit of the best work." She was herself a marvellous example of this sort of humility. Her whole object was to live and die in obscurity in the midst of her poor, and her idea of perfection was to do the most ordinary duties in the very best manner. Her multiplicity of occupations prevented her spending much time in the chapel; but nothing interrupted her constant union with God. One day she said: "I do not think I

ever pray so well as when I am in the streets. The passers-by are no more to me than the trees in a wood." The commonest and most ordinary work filled her mind with spiritual images. When the Sisters were one day complaining that a heavy washing would prevent their having time to go to the chapel, she said: "You can make your meditation here, without leaving your work. Think that your souls should be as white as these soap-suds and as light, so as to be able to rise easily to thoughts of God: and that you will never be able to make your consciences as pure and clean as this linen, without washing them in the waters of penitence."

But our space will not admit of further details. We must come to her holy and beautiful acceptance of suffering and death. For the fifty years that she had been labouring in the district of St. Marceau, she had been rarely without suffering. She had constant palpitations of the heart, and tertiary fevers; but for the last year or two of her life, God sent her the heaviest of all afflictions, to one of her zealous and active temperament. She became totally blind. In 1855, one of the most able of the Paris surgeons operated upon her for cateract, and at first it was hoped that the operation would be successful: but very soon the flicker of light which had been granted to her disappeared, and she was plunged in total darkness. In 1856 a fresh operation was proposed: but in February she caught a chill, pleurisy set in, and her condition at once caused the greatest anxiety.

The year before, she had attended the death-bed of the holy Mère Fournier, the Superior of the Visitation, who had said, when taking her last leave of her: "Courage, dear Sister! you will follow me soon." She had been struck with the words, but had simply said to her Sisters: "If God wills me to stop a few years longer on this earth, I do not wish to leave it." On the 6th, she felt better, and her Sisters hoped that the disease had yielded to the remedies: but a few hours later, violent pain returned, and fever set in. She went on, however, speaking of the

wants of the poor, and recommending certain cases to the Sisters, when all of a sudden her speech became troubled, and she partially lost consciousness. The priest was hurriedly sent for, and gave her Extreme Unction; she made the sign of the cross, murmured one or two words of prayer, and then expired without a moment's agony or agitation: it was truly a "falling asleep in God."

When the news became known, the grief among the people was such as to astonish even those who had known her best. Men of every class and every age crowded round her body, which had been exposed in the Chapel, dressed in her habit as a Sister of Charity. Her face was perfectly calm, and wore her usually sweet expression; but death had added that grandeur and majesty which is often seen in the countenances of those who have led holy and supernatural lives. No sooner were the doors open, than an enormous procession was formed of men, women, and children, all anxious to look once more on the face of one who had been more than a mother to them in life. They kissed her feet and her dress, they touched her body with their rosaries and handkerchiefs, and struggled for every little thing she had used or worn. The following day a multitude whom no one could number followed her humble coffin to the grave: rich and poor, learned men and labourers, ecclesiastics of the highest rank, statesmen and workmen, all were there, grieving and weeping, and each and all recounting the services she had rendered them, and expressing their deep admiration, and their heartfelt regrets. The funeral procession passed through the whole district of what had been laughingly called her "diocese;" and at every door the women and children who had not been able to join in the procession, were sobbing and praying, every shop was shut, every labourer and artisan gave up his day's work to follow the simple hearse to the cemetery of Mont Parnasse, where she was laid in the corner reserved for the Sisters of Charity. A little later, a

beautiful stone cross was erected over her remains, which bore the following inscription:—

"To Sister Rosalie,
From her grateful friends,
both rich and poor."

The night before her death, her mother had expired without illness or agony at the age of eighty-eight, having always before her eyes the portrait of her daughter, who had been her greatest glory and consolation.

Before closing this short sketch, we would ask our readers, what was the secret of this humble sister's extraordinary influence? It was her simple performance every hour of the day of ordinary duties, done in the most perfect manner. "True devotion," wrote St. John of the Cross, "is humble, silent, without singularity or presumption, full of distrust of itself, following, with ardour, simple and common rules." Such was the religion of Sœur Rosalie, and such an example we all may follow if we will. That hidden devotedness which sacrifices itself every hour of the day and which, without any human notice, spends itself for others, exacts the highest virtue in the one who practises it. A wise man has said that it is to the vulgar, daily toil of the poor agricultural labourer that we owe our richest harvests; and in the same way, the humble Christian teaching of a primary school tends more to the regeneration of a people, than the most eloquent lecturer, philosopher, or doctor. Sœur Rosalie cured more evils and saved more souls by her visits, her words, and her daily sympathy and help, than men whose deeds have been famous and whose actions heroic. May we all take this lesson to heart, and however humble our lives and our position, may we each practise that loving charity in daily life which was Sœur Rosalie's great secret for winning souls to God.

St. Cuthbert.*

BY MRS. FRANCIS KERR.

Introductory.

THERE are two main sources from which we draw our knowledge of the life of St. Cuthbert :—

1st. The writings of a contemporary and friend who lived with him both at Melrose and at Lindisfarne, and who is known as "the Monk of Lindisfarne." He wrote by desire of Bishop Eadfrid and the brethren of the latter monastery between 698 and 705. The life is dedicated to the Bishop, who was the immediate successor but one of St. Cuthbert in the see of Lindisfarne.

In his prologue the Monk of Lindisfarne says : "Let me assure (my readers) that they may accept without the smallest hesitation everything I shall record. I beg them so to accept it and to believe I state nothing of which I am not absolutely certain. I have preferred to be silent when I ran any risk of stating what is false."

2ndly. The histories of Ven. Bede, who was fourteen years of age when the Saint died, and who wrote about fifty years after the earliest events he records about him.

*The facts and narratives in the following account of the Saint are taken from the Life by the Monk of Lindisfarne (recently published by Father W. Forbes-Leith, S.J.); from the exhaustive work by his Grace the Archbishop of Glasgow; and from the Rev. J. Stevenson's translation of the life by Bede. All that is mentioned in the Saint's life is to be found in the Monk of Lindisfarne and Ven. Bede.

Bede wrote both a metrical and a prose Life, besides chapters of his Ecclesiastical History which deal with St. Cuthbert. He incorporated a good deal from the Monk of Lindisfarne. In the preface to the prose life he says: "I have not presumed without minute investigation to write any of the deeds of so great a man, nor without the most accurate examination of credible witnesses, to hand over what I had written to be transcribed. When my work was arranged but still kept back from publication, I frequently submitted it, for perusal and for correction, to our reverend brothers Herefrid the priest and others, who for a long time had well known the life and conversation of that man of God. Some faults were, at their suggestion, carefully amended, and thus, every scruple being utterly removed, I have taken care to submit to writing what I clearly ascertained to be the truth, and to bring it into your presence also, my brethren, in order that by the judgement of your authority, what I have written might be corrected if false, or certified to be true. Whilst with God's assistance I was so engaged, my book was read during two days by the elders and teachers of your congregation, and was accurately weighed and examined in all its parts; there was nothing at all found which required to be altered, but everything I had written was, by common consent, pronounced to be worthy to be read without any hesitation, and to be handed over to be copied by such as by zeal for religion should be disposed to do so."

I.

It is not within our purpose to enter into the various discussions as to the birthplace of St. Cuthbert. Suffice it to say that the report of his Irish origin was first mentioned in a MS. of the 14th century, and may have originated in a mistaken transcript of the name Cuthbert for that of Columba, as the rest of the narrative tallies with the account of the birth of that Saint. An inscription in Durham Cathedral and a stained glass window were put up at a comparatively late period, to commemorate the version contained in the said MS., but among early biographies no trace of it exists, while Bede distinctly says in the metrical life that St. Cuthbert was born in Britain.

There can be no reasonable doubt that he was born of Anglian parentage, and in humble circumstances, in Northumbria, probably among the Lammermuirs, but possibly also lower down the country in the region of the Tweed, on the borders of Roxburghshire and Berwickshire, where one or two localities have been suggested. His parents died when he was about eight years of age, and his childhood seems to have been spent in keeping sheep by Leaderside. He was devout from his earliest years, and was in the habit of spending a great part of the night in prayer, while watching his flocks. At the same time, we are told that he excelled in athletic games, and could beat all his playfellows in running, jumping and wrestling. He was as quick in mind as in body. Several incidents of his early years have been preserved to us. On one occasion, he was romping boisterously with other boys, when a child of not more than three years of age tried to stop him—of course to no purpose—at which the little fellow threw himself on the ground and sobbed bitterly. The boys goodnaturedly left off their games and began to comfort him. The child presently turned to Cuthbert and gravely said these solemn words: "Holy Cuthbert, priest and bishop, wherefore do what is so unfit for one like you? It is not right that you, who are appointed by God to teach and lead to virtue others older than yourself, should play among children." Cuthbert could not fully understand the strange words, but he gave up the sports and went away pondering them in his heart. While still a child he had a bad swelling in one knee, and the leg contracted so that he could not walk. He used to be carried out every day and laid down near a wall in the sunshine. One day he saw riding towards him a man clad in white and very beautiful, who asked him for hospitality. The child replied that by God's permission he was disabled for the time, otherwise he would willingly have ministered to him. The stranger questioned him kindly, and on hearing what was the matter, bid him boil wheat-flour with milk and while warm bathe his knee with it. After some days of the treatment, Cuthbert was cured, and from that time always believed he had been helped by his guardian angel.

A touching incident of his youth must also be mentioned. He had been sent on some business in winter a long distance beyond the River Wear. The country was desolate, and heavy rains overtook him, while the only shelter he could find was a deserted shed used by shepherds in summer when pasturing their flocks among the hills. Hungry and weary, he looked round to see if any stray provisions had been left by them, but finding none, he settled down to pray and to await the clearing of the weather. His horse which was tied inside the hut meanwhile began to nibble at the low-thatched roof, and presently pulled down some hay out of which fell fresh bread and meat, wrapped in a cloth. We are told that he finished his devotions before he partook of these unexpected rations, after which, joyfully thanking God, he continued his journey. His biographers tell us that they omit many wonderful incidents of his early life, to pass the more quickly to his maturer years.

In 651 died St. Aidan, the great apostle of Northern Northumbria or Bernicia, founder of the famous monastery of Lindisfarne, and also of Mailros on the Tweed. Cuthbert had grown up under the shadow of Mailros, so to speak, and must have been familiar with the monks. Their life, it may have been, that first prompted him to night-watches and prayer, while St. Aidan's death was, as we shall see, the turning point in his career. One night, while he kept the flocks with other shepherds on the hills by Tweed and Leader, he was watching in prayer as usual, when lo! a stream of light broke through the darkness, and he beheld angels descending from heaven and presently mounting upwards again, bearing with them a globe of fire, which Cuthbert understood to be the soul of the holy bishop Aidan at that moment passing to glory. He roused his companions and told them of the vision, and they praised God together; but he himself determined to hand over the flocks to their owners, and to give himself to God in a monastery.

Eata was then Abbot of Mailros. The community brought there by St. Aidan were probably a colony from Iona. Thither Cuthbert wended his way, attracted doubtless by early association, but chiefly by the reputation for holiness of St. Boisil the Prior, whose

name survives in that of the village of St. Boswell. We are told that on the way he was fed by ravens as Elijah of old. He leapt from his horse at the monastery gate and gave it up together with his spear. Boisil, who had watched him coming, turned to one of the brethren near, and exclaimed: "Behold a servant of the Lord!" "O my brethren," writes the monk of Lindisfarne of this period of Cuthbert's life, "I presume not to think myself worthy to have enjoyed his conversation. No words could ever express what that was. An angel in look, graceful in language, holy in what he did, pure in body, brilliant in genius, great in counsel, Catholic in faith, most patient in hope, and boundless in charity." He kept the rule with the greatest fervour, and was foremost in reading, working, watching and prayer. Though his frame was robust, and the amount of work he undertook very great, his endurance in fasting and watchings was amazing. Moreover, he abstained entirely from any strong drink. St. Boisil loved him beyond all the brethren, on account of his marvellous innocence of life. Cuthbert studied the Scriptures under his guidance, and advanced in wisdom and grace before God and man.

II.

The Mailros of St. Cuthbert was about two miles further down the Tweed than the famous Abbey built by St. David nearly five hundred years later, the ruins of which are now known as Melrose Abbey.

Old Melrose was built on a tongue of land almost encircled by the Tweed. On the other side, a bare red cliff, which extends some way, rises straight from the river; the banks, steep on both sides, are, except when broken by the cliff, luxuriously and beautifully wooded, and, on the further side, are over-topped by rounded hills of grass and heather which rise to a great height. These are the traditional hills of Cuthbert's childhood. From them we may behold glorious stretches of undulating border moorlands, bounded by the Cheviots, which, though only twenty miles off, owing to the effects of cloud and mist, often have the appearance of great and distant mountains. Glorious are the lights and

shadows as they roll over the moorlands, producing infinite variety and effect of colour. Was it so in St. Cuthbert's time? or was the country too thickly wooded to allow their magic effects free play? Immediately in front the Eildons rise like sentinels, silent witnesses of the deeds of the Border Saints as of those of the many other human beings, whether monks or moss-troopers, nobles or peasants, invaders or invaded, who fought, worked, prayed and suffered in the country around during so many centuries. Deep below us, winding and threading through the wooded gorge, here rippling and shimmering, there dark with salmonpool, the river flows, and after doubling round Old Melrose, winds on towards the undulating country, where its course can be followed only by the masses of wood on either side.

After some years at Melrose, Cuthbert accompanied Eata to make a new foundation at Ripon. Here he was appointed to look after the guests, and it is said that he once entertained an angel under the guise of a pilgrim. Freshly fallen snow was on the ground: he had washed the feet of the weary stranger according to custom, and had then gone to the bakery for bread, as the usual provision was done. The new loaves were still in the oven, and he returned forthwith, but the guest had disappeared. No footmarks pressed the snow: while in an inner room lay wondrously fragrant loaves, which filled the place with their perfume.

Before long, Eata and his companions had returned to Melrose—dismissed in fact—while the monastery was handed over to another community. This was owing to the differences which existed as to the right time of keeping Easter. King Alchfrid (son of Oswy), who had given the land at Ripon, had been instructed in the faith by St. Wilfrid, and kept the feast at the time definitely fixed not long before this period by the Pope; while the monks of Melrose and Ripon still followed the custom established at Iona by St. Columba. This had been handed down from the missionaries who converted Ireland, and doubtless had been in very general use, as well as authorized by the Popes, at the time they brought the faith to that country. It naturally

took time for the more distant off-shoots and outlying portions of the Church, in those days of difficult travelling and communication, to realize that Rome had found reason to alter the observance on which so much of practical life both ecclesiastical and other depended. The Northumbrians had been brought round to the custom of Rome and of the Universal Church chiefly through St. Wilfrid at the Council of Whitby in 664. Later on, we find Eata and his companions also ranking with its adherents, but it was not till 715 that the Scots and Picts, as nations, gave up their erroneous computation.

In 664 a terrible pestilence broke out which almost depopulated the land. Both Boisil and Cuthbert were seized with it; the latter recovered almost immediately, owing, as he considered, to the prayers of the brethren. It was otherwise with St. Boisil, who, sending for his disciple, foretold to him all that should befall him, and how he would become a bishop; adding that for himself he knew he would die in seven days, and therefore he begged him to meditate with him on the Gospel of St. John, of which the seven quarto pages of his copy would each occupy one day. After seven days of calm and holy study, Boisil fell asleep in the Lord, and Cuthbert, was made Prior. He remained for the next ten years at Melrose, living the life of a saint both within the monastery, and among the people. Then as now men did not always live up to their profession of faith. During the pestilence some of the population had disgraced themselves by recourse to charms and other remnants of idolatry. From these practices Cuthbert reclaimed them. He never spared himself to win their souls, but toiled among them, generally on foot, though sometimes on horseback, being often away from the monastery a month at a time on his apostolic expeditions. On these occasions, how often he must have crossed the Lammermuirs and the braes of Yarrow and Ettrick, of Gala and of Teviot! Along their banks, and all through Northumbria he preached and worked his miracles—at least as far north, in all probability, as the Forth.

When he reached a village, the people, as was customary in those days, gathered round him, to hear the

Word of God. So angelic was his countenance on these occasions, that he took men's hearts by storm: they openly poured out alike their sins and their most secret thoughts, from the conviction that nothing would escape his sanctified vision, owing to the great light he received from God.

It may be well here to say a few words of explanation in connection with some of the miraculous occurrences and wonders recorded in his life.

A miracle may be defined as an extraordinary effect produced in the natural creation, either contrary to the known laws of nature or beside the usual course of nature, and above the abilities of natural agents, performed either by God Himself or by His holy Angels, or by some other instrument of God's choice. The power of miracles is often bestowed by God upon His Saints, for the manifestation of Divine Power, either as a witness to Divine Truth, or as a seal to the character and mission of a representative or messenger of God; or again in answer to the humble prayer of faith for the good of men: there are plentiful examples in the Old and New Testaments and throughout the history of the Church. St. Cuthbert appears to have possessed the gift in a high degree; his life also abounds with narratives of graces and kindnesses (so to speak) bestowed by Providence in answer to his requests. God no doubt provides in a special way for the needs of those who specially give up their lives to His work; and that He does this even in minute particulars, the lives of every one of the Saints, and of holy people innumerable, bear witness. As to some of the wonders related of his perfect control over the animals and their docility, it must be remembered that this power was originally bestowed upon man as a preternatural gift in his state of innocence; and we find from time to time God bestowing it anew on some of His servants for His own good purposes. With all allowance for legend, the hermits of the desert in the early days of the Church, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Antony of Padua in the middle ages, and St. Francis Xavier and others later on, furnish well-known examples of this form of miraculous power. It seems to come home to us as fitting that the marvellously pure of heart, not being

under the dominion of sin, should be given some of the privileges intended for man had he remained faithful. These remarks may help to reduce difficulties with regard to some of the occurrences mentioned by the biographers of St. Cuthbert which, at first sight, may seem fantastic and legendary, and which assuredly are not binding on our faith, though by no means impossible.

A case in point occurred during a visit to the Monastery of Coldingham in Berwickshire, of which Ebba, daughter of Ethelrid, King of Northumbria, was Abbess. She governed her house of nuns and also the adjoining monastery. This arrangement was not unfrequent in Anglo-Saxon times, in cases where the Abbess of the Convent had originally founded both institutions, more especially when she possessed good governing capabilities. Ebba had earnestly begged Cuthbert to come to Coldingham as she much needed his advice. During his stay at the monastery, he spent his usual night-watches of prayer on the seashore. A monk who out of curiosity, watched him one night, saw him go into the sea up to the loins and remain there some time with the waves rushing over his shoulders. Afterwards he knelt in prayer on the beach, where a wonderful thing occurred. Two small animals(called "sea otters" by the biographers) came up from the water and lay down at his feet, and licked them and rubbed them as if to warm them. After a little, Cuthbert blessed them and they left him. The intruding monk, who suffered severely from the inclemency of the night, did not venture to make his adventure known till the next day, when he confessed it to the Saint, who gave him to understand he was already aware of it, and made him promise never to reveal during his life what he had seen. This promise the monk kept, but after Cuthbert's death he solemnly deposed to it.

Somewhere about this time, during a missionary expedition, he and a boy, his only companion, were walking along the banks of the river Teviot (as it is supposed), when he asked the boy where he thought they would get that day's food. The boy answered that indeed he knew not. "Trust in Him who said, Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all else shall be

added to you," said the Saint; and pointing to a large bird flying overhead, continued: "Yonder bird, by the mercy of God, will provide for us;" and truly the bird alighted near the river, and presently they found him with a large fish of which they took a half, and left the rest, as Cuthbert said, "for the fisherman." Their own part they carried to the nearest dwelling, where they cooked and ate it, and had enough besides for some of the people of the place. In a certain village (thought to have been Wrangholm) he occasionally visited a good woman who had brought him up after the death of his parents, and who he used to say had been a mother to him. On one occasion a fire broke out, and her house was in danger of destruction owing to the strong wind, which blew the flames towards it. He bade her not fear, and cast himself on the ground at her door in silent prayer, when immediately the wind changed and blew in a direction in which it was harmless. The following quaint and vividly described incident is full of instruction. Once when preaching inside some building to a number of people, he was interiorly enlightened to know that Satan, at work among them, would make a great effort to thwart the work of God in their souls. He thereupon begged them on no account, whatever might happen, to allow themselves to be interrupted, as the evil one wished to delude them. Presently a cry of fire arose and, forgetful of his warning, all except two or three whom he kept back with his hand, rushed out to see, but on reaching the house where they thought they had seen the flames and smoke, though they even began to pull down the walls, no traces of fire could be found on which, with shame and sorrow, they returned to the Saint and begged his forgiveness. The Monk of Lindisfarne, who records most of these stories, mentions that some of the people concerned were still living when he wrote.

After twelve years at Melrose, Cuthbert was moved to Lindisfarne,* which monastery was built on the rock afterwards called Holy Island, an island only at high tide

* So much has been written about Lindisfarne, and it has been so often described, that we will not here enter into any details about that celebrated monastery.

when there is a depth of from seven to nine feet of water between it and the mainland. He there continued to be the apostle of the people of Northumbria while his miracles became more conspicuous; like our Lord and His disciples, he cured the sick and the suffering and cast out devils. He was the first to draw up a religious rule for the brethren of Lindisfarne, which ever after was observed by them along with that of St. Benedict, which in after times they embraced. Though in this he at first met with opposition, his patience and resolute, yet judicious conduct soon won round those who objected.

We are told the outward calm of his presence betokened the internal consolations of the Holy Ghost amid his vexations. At this time he would spend three or four successive nights in prayer. His devotion in saying Mass was so great he could not keep back abundant tears, while the fervour of his zeal in correcting sinners was so tempered with gentleness that he wept over those who confessed to him. We are told that his clothing was most ordinary, neither slovenly nor yet over-neat.

As Prior of Lindisfarne, Cuthbert spent twelve more years of his monastic life, and then unable any longer to repress the aspirations of his soul towards a solitary life for the purpose of converse with God alone, after a short sojourn on a rock close to Holy Island, he was allowed to retire to complete solitude in the lonely islet of Farne, about six miles distant from Lindisfarne, though only two from the mainland. Farne was reported to be infected with evil spirits, and no one had ever lived there, though several had made the attempt. It is one of a group of twenty-three islets—a mere rock some eleven acres in extent at low-tide. The southern end rises precipitously from the sea to a height of eighty feet; the northern, though sloping, is exposed to the full fury of the ópen sea. On the east is a small natural haven. At that time about five acres was fit to cultivate, but there was neither fresh water nor trees. He began forthwith to build a round cell, some four or five poles across. We are told the wall was truly extraordinary—a cubit in height, and built of stones so large that no one who was unaware of the great strength with which he was endowed could have believed them to be

movable. It is said he was helped by angels. Inside he formed a chamber, partly dug out of the solid rock and divided it into two compartments from whence he could behold nothing but the sky overhead. As the spot was likely to prove uninhabitable for want of water, he sent for the brethren, and begged them to join him in praying to God, who gave water from the rock to Moses, and likewise to help him in the search for some. They both prayed and dug deeply in the middle of the stony ground of the cell. Soon a spring gushed forth. The water from that time never either overflowed or failed, and was excellently sweet.

He vainly tried to grow wheat in the land, but was more successful with barley; he said he would sooner return to the monastery than tax the brethren with his maintenance. At first he was worried by the birds that picked his crops, but after a gentle expostulation and command not to injure what did not belong to them, they gave up doing so. Two amusing and disobedient old ravens, however, who used to strip the thatch from the roof of a house of shelter near the haven were gravely ordered off the island. They departed accordingly, but afterwards were allowed to return, when they gave token of penitence and entirely mended their ways! A touching token of the tender care of Divine Providence took place while he was labouring to build a hut beside a deep cleft in the rocks near the sea. He needed a beam of twelve feet in length for part of the foundation, to span the cleft, and begged the monks to bring him one. They readily promised, but it passed out of their minds and they returned without. He would not let them give way to much distress however, but sweetly told them he thought God would provide for his needs. The next morning it was found that the tide had washed ashore a beam of the length required, on the spot where he meant to built.

At first the brethren often visited him, when he washed their feet and ministered to them, but he gradually withdrew even from their society. The fame of his extraordinary virtues spread rapidly, however, and numbers came even from the remotest parts of Britain to confess their sins and ask advice in their temptations. None left

him unstrengthened or unconsoled. Lest the brethren should have too exalted an idea of him, he used to speak to them of his trials and temptations, and tell them that community life, when the monks were subject to the will of their Abbot, who regulated their time and everything else, was harder and more admirable than his solitude. So great, however, was his holiness and the miraculous power vouchsafed to him by God that, like the apostles of old, the very things he wore or touched, wrought cures on the sick.

We may instance the cure of the Abbess Elflid of Whitby, a daughter, grand-daughter and sister of kings, who suffered from a grievous illness which baffled the skill of all the physicians, and after a long continuance of the same was reduced to the point of death, and yet not dying, remained in a most helpless condition in which she could not raise herself or stand at all nor move except on all fours like an animal. She began to fear her piteous condition was permanent. In her grief she was inspired with the thought that could she but obtain something that belonged to the reverend man of God, she might, with trust in God, be cured. Soon after, some one arrived with a gift of a linen girdle sent to her by Cuthbert, to whom she understood her wish had been made known by heaven. She girded herself with it; the next day she was able to stand erect, and the third day was restored to perfect health. One of her nuns likewise was cured from intolerable pains in her head by the touch of the same girdle.

The time was now drawing near when Boisil's last prophecy was to be fulfilled. Shortly before the event, this same Abbess, Elflid of Whitby, after much entreaty, obtained an interview with the Saint at a monastery on a small island close to the mainland. She had long wished for his advice, and they communed long and earnestly before they parted. While he was yet speaking, she suddenly threw herself at his feet, and adjured him, with many tears by the terrible Name of the heavenly King and of His holy Angels and Saints, to tell her how long her brother King Egfrid would live and rule. He, trembling at her adjuration, tried to put her off, and asked how she could use the word "long"

at all with regard to this miserable life, but finally answered: "O handmaid of God, surely twelve months of life is no small privilege," whereat understanding how soon he would die, she wept bitterly. Taking courage, however, she again adjured him by the majesty of the sovereignty of God to tell her who would succeed. He answered her questions, and spoke of his own near call to the episcopate, which he said he fain would have prevented but knew must be; and finally foretold his death in two years from that time, all of which things took place as he said. Soon after, Cuthbert was appointed to the See of Lindisfarne, in the room of Eata, who was made bishop of Hexham. The circumstances that caused his election are to be found in the history of those times. Suffice it here to say it was decreed at an important synod held at Twyford, and presided over by Archbishop Theodore, in the presence of King Egfrid.

Letters and messages had no effect in overcoming Cuthbert's reluctance to accept the dignity. The King and the holy Bishop Trumwin, with several monks and great men, therefore went to seek him in person, and kneeling round him, with tears besought him to return with them to the synod. The King even reminded him of what St. Boisil had foretold, nor did they desist till he gave way and, his eyes filled with tears, consented to appear before the synod. The consecration was delayed, however, for some months, and eventually took place in Eastertide, March 26th, at York, in the presence of King Egfrid and of seven other Bishops, at the head of whom was the Primate Archbishop Theodore. It was probably during this interval that he and Bishop Eata met once more at their much beloved Mailros. On the way hence he cured the servant of one of the King's attendants with water which he had blessed.

The following May St. Cuthbert's prediction with regard to King Egfrid was fulfilled—he was killed in battle with the Picts, probably in Galloway, in the fortieth year of his age, and was succeeded by his half-brother Aldfrid. Egfrid had been warned by St. Cuthbert not to undertake the expedition, but when the time for the fulfilment of the prophecy drew near, the Saint went to Lugubalia or Luel (Carlisle) where the Queen was awaiting the issue

of the campaign in her sister's monastery, probably that he might be at hand to give her comfort and help in the coming tribulation. The next day some of the leading inhabitants were showing him the many Roman remains in the city, especially a fountain of great beauty, when he suddenly became troubled and bent himself to the ground; then lifting up his eyes to heaven he groaned and said, "Perhaps even now the issue of the battle is over." He then made known to them that a great misfortune had befallen them; and going to the Queen advised her to start without delay for the royal city (probably Bamborough) lest the King should be slain; and even so it was ascertained to have happened, at the day and hour when he was standing by the Roman fountain. Not long after, he returned to Carlisle for the purpose of ordinations, and to bless the entrance into religious life of the widowed Queen.

There the venerable hermit Herbert, who dwelt on an island in Derwentwater, and with whom he had long been united in the closest ties of spiritual friendship, came to meet him. In each other's presence, and in the hearing of many other people, Cuthbert foretold the time of his death, whereon Herbert besought him so earnestly if he were going to the heavenly home not to leave him, his friend and disciple, behind that Cuthbert, after praying for a few moments, said to him: "Rejoice and do not weep, brother, for God has granted what you so much wish." The event proved it, for both died the same day and hour, though Herbert had a long sickness which prepared him for his end.

To this same year, 686, belong several great miracles of the Saint. During the episcopal visitation, while preaching and confirming among the villages, he came to the dwelling of a certain Earl whose wife lay dying. On seeing the Saint arrive, the Earl knelt down in his joy to thank God for a visit so opportune, and then after offering the usual rites of hospitality, told him of his wife's hopeless state, and begged with great simplicity that he would bless some water with which she might be sprinkled, and thus either be restored to health or helped in her passage to eternity. The Bishop complied, and desired a priest to sprinkle her

with the blessed water. The sick woman was immediately restored to complete health of mind and body. She rose, thanked God, and attended to her guests according to the usage of the times. A nun, kinswoman of Ethelwald, Abbot of Mailros (later Bishop of Lindisfarne), who suffered from intolerable pains in the head and side, and who was despaired of by the physicians, was cured after being anointed by Cuthbert with consecrated oil. Hildmer the prefect, whose wife in former days had been delivered from madness or "possession" by the Saint, was now himself miraculously cured by drinking water in which a morsel of loaf blessed by the Saint had been broken, on which the internal pain and wasting away of the limbs ceased entirely.

Somewhere about this time he visited the Abbess Verca at her monastery near the mouth of the Tyne (probably the Tyne in Northumberland as it is called a large river) and there he renewed our Lord's first miracle by giving to water the flavour of wine. During that same visit, while sitting at the table he was enlightened from above to know the sudden death of one of the brethren of the adjoining monastery whose soul he saw going to glory. It was found on investigation that one of them, a shepherd in an outlying farm had been killed at the time by falling from a tree, and the news was brought in just in time for his name to be included in the memento for the dead at the Saint's Mass that morning.

The unflagging zeal of the holy Bishop led him to visit every corner of his great diocese. In one wild place among the hills, where many people from different outlying villages had gathered together for confirmation, there was neither church nor dwelling. Rude huts of branches were hastily put up by some of the people as shelter for him and for themselves. For two days he preached to crowds and, as we are told, "imparted the grace of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands to those who had been recently baptized." Before they all scattered again, some poor women arrived carrying on a litter a young man in the last degree of emaciation from disease. They had brought him to receive the

Bishop's blessing. Cuthbert, touched with compassion, bade the crowd withdraw, and pouring himself out in prayer presently blessed him, "who arose and went his way" in sound health, after eating, while he and the crowds of people exulted in thanksgiving. In another village where the plague was raging, he visited and comforted all who were stricken by it, eagerly asking his chaplain if there were not yet more who needed him or whether they should pass on elsewhere The chaplain presently found a woman who had already lost one son and who held another who was dying in her arms. Cuthbert kissed and blessed the child and promised the poor mother that not only should he recover but that she should lose no other of her family from the plague.

Amidst all his comings and goings and the turmoil with which he was surrounded as bishop, his charities were boundless; he unceasingly fed the hungry and clothed the naked; while towards himself he continued the austerities of monastic life. In good sooth his whole soul yearned for God, nor was his ardent spirit to be kept long parted from his Maker. Within two years of his becoming bishop, Cuthbert, knowing the end was approaching, resigned his See, and after spending the feast of Christmas in his episcopal Church, with the brethren, betook himself once more to Farne. A crowd of monks stood by as he stepped into the boat; a very aged one, himself suffering from a wasting illness, asked him when he should return. "When you bring my body here," was the reply.

Before long some of the brethren went to see him; he exhorted them and blessed them, and bade them refresh themselves with what he had prepared in the guest house and then returned to his cell. The brethren however preferred to eat what they had brought with them. Meanwhile a storm arose which raged for seven days and prevented their leaving. At the end of that time the Saint came again and reproved them for not having obeyed him, and ordered them forthwith to seek his refreshments and partake of them. By the time they had done this, the storm had subsided, and a favourable breeze and sufficiently calm sea enabled them to return to Lindisfarne.

The circumstances of his last illness were minutely recorded by the Abbot Herefrid who was with him at the last, and from whom Bede received them. Herefrid and several monks had been for three days on the island, and visited him before leaving. Cuthbert owned that a new sickness had come over him, but would not allow any of them to stay, and they, not understanding the gravity of the case, after some remonstrance went their way, not however without receiving directions from him as to his burial.

He said he wished to be wrapped in the winding sheet provided by the Abbess Verca, and to be laid near his Oratory to the east of the cross he had put up. Much alarmed by these instructions they renewed their entreaties without avail. On arriving at Lindisfarne, they assembled the brethren in the Church to pray for him. A storm prevented their getting across to Farne for five days, and when they were able to do so, they found him very weak, not in his cell, but in the guest house. With a little warm water they washed an ulcerated sore in his foot, from which a quantity of blood came away, and seeing him so utterly worn with pain and abstinence, they warmed some wine, and persuaded him to take a little, while Herefrid tenderly reproached him for not having allowed them to stay before. He answered: "God willed that, thus deprived of society and the help of man, I should suffer some affliction. When you were gone, my illness increased and I came hither to meet whoever of you might return, in order that you need not enter my cell." He had been there five days and nights without moving, with only five onions by way of food, and of these he had only eaten half one. He told them that his enemies (evil spirits) had never so persecuted him as during those five days. Herefrid tells us he dared not ask him what the temptations had been. Two of his brethren stayed with him, one of whom had always been accustomed to see him.

Meanwhile, Herefrid and the monks determined to spare no efforts to induce him to allow his body to be buried at Lindisfarne. He agreed, but said he himself thought the place where he had mainly fought his humble fight for the Lord was the most suitable for his

body to rest, in that also he had feared they would be troubled by the number of criminals and others who would fly to take sanctuary near it. He advised them therefore to bury it within the church, as there they could at least control those who came, and visit it themselves. They carried him back to his cell. None but himself had ever entered it, but they besought him now to allow one of them to do so. He chose the aged one, already mentioned as having a severe complaint. Of this however he himself told the brethren he was cured as soon as he began to uphold the weak steps of the bishop and to support his weight. The dying Saint then sent for Herefrid, who gave him the last sacraments and received his last recommendations. "Have peace," he said, "and divine charity ever amongst you. Let there be mutual concord between you and all other servants of Christ, but have no communion with those who err from the unity of the Catholic Faith either by keeping Easter at an improper time, or by their wicked lives; and know and remember that, sooner than consent in any way to the wickedness of schismatics, thus placing a yoke on your neck, I would rather you leave this place to reside wherever God may direct you." This advice was followed to the letter in after ages. At midnight he lifted up his eyes to heaven, held out his hands, and his soul departed to the joys of heaven on March 20th, 687.

The monks at once carried his body to Lindisfarne, where it was prepared with aromatic spices for burial, according to the custom of the day. They swathed it in the linen cerecloth (which adhered tightly to the skin) and wrapped the head in a white napkin; the episcopal vestments, in which he was wont to offer the Holy Sacrifice, were put on. Unconsecrated sacramental elements were placed on his breast with the chalice and paten, the tokens of his priesthood. Another cerecloth enclosed the whole, and he was laid in a stone coffin. This was placed on the righthand side of the altar in the Church of his See, St. Peter's at Lindisfarne. From this time continuous miracles were wrought by his intercession and by the touch of his relics. The first of these was the cure of a possessed boy, on whom the usual exorcisms of the Church had had no effect.

III.

According to pious Anglo-Saxon custom with regard to those who had been eminently holy, the monks obtained leave from Bishop Eadbert, eleven years after the death, to take up the remains, which they then enclosed in a wooden shrine. Venerable Bede and the Monk of Lindisfarne both give vivid descriptions of the opening of the stone coffin, of the reverent fear and joy of the monks when they found the body entire, the colour preserved, and his joints flexible; the white linen cloths next the skin had kept their original whiteness, his garments and the shoes (the latter were new when he was buried) were undecayed and fresh. By the Bishop's directions, a part of the outer dress was removed and a new one put over the other priestly robes; a new cere-cloth was added before the body was placed in the wooden coffin. Bede, who was about twenty-four years of age at this time, records the examination minutely. Several miracles took place: one of the brethren was cured from palsy; a paralytic young man recovered the use of his limbs; a priest from the diocese of St. Willibrord, Bishop of the Frisians, who was dangerously ill, obtained a cure; while a young man who had a bad swelling in the eye-lid, which threatened to deprive him of sight, was also cured by the touch of the relics. Bede testifies that "to this day miracles are wrought, if the faith of those who seek them admit of it. Even the clothes which cover him possess a healing power." The devotion at the shrine then grew more and more, and attracted numbers of pilgrims.

At the close of the eighth century came evil days. The Danes landed and perpetrated every kind of horror throughout Northumbria. Lindisfarne and its church were pillaged, the monks were slaughtered, and boys whom they had trained were carried off as slaves. A few brethren escaped, and these on their return found the body of the Saint untouched. The church and commmunity were before long restored and soon flourished again, but eighty-two years later another savage invasion took place. This time the monks determined to be before-hand, and to leave the island.

by the advice of their bishop Eardulph, who reminded them of the Saint's last words. They hastily removed the shrine; various other precious relics were put along with the body in the coffin; seven bearers were chosen from among the bishop's clerks; and with their precious burden they crossed over to the mainland, accompanied by their people with their flocks and herds. We are told that it was high tide, in fact a spring tide, when they came to the shores and lo! while they were waiting for the ebb, the waters divided of their own accord to the right and left, and formed a passage for them, after which they closed as before. Their flight was none too soon: the church was once more pillaged, and vengeance sworn by the Danes against the monks should they ever return.

IV.

For seven whole years the body was carried from place to place, from the hills of Kyloe to the Cheviots, through all the country that is now Yorkshire, Lancashire, Durham, Westmoreland, Northumberland, Cumberland and Roxburgh, even into Galloway. The land was afterwards studded with churches and chapels built on the spots where the coffin had rested. To the people who had accompained the monks from Lindisfarne, were gradually added the Christian natives of the districts through which they passed, so that the numbers who followed rose to a great multitude. The bearers who carried the coffin on their shoulders were periodically renewed from among the laymen.* How they escaped the fury of the Danes is marvellous.

As time went on, however, many of the people lost heart and withdrew; but Bishop Eardulph and the Abbot of Carlisle both remained with the wanderers. About the seventh year a great famine, the result of the ravages of the Danes, drove them to embark from the mouth of the Derwent, and endeavour to seek refuge in Ireland; they were turned back however by terrific gales and nearly shipwrecked. On this occasion they lost a

* To a late date there were still families in the north of England who boasted of their descent from the bearers of the body of St. Cuthbert.

copy of the Gospels set with precious stones, which they had always carried about, and which they recovered in a wonderful way on the shore at Whitherne, the spot where, centuries before, St. Ninian had built the first Christian church in Scotland. During the last months of their wanderings the need of some kind of vehicle to carry the coffin became pressing, and a light cart and horse were supplied in the wild country through which they passed in a touching and providential manner. The times now became more secure, and after a few months' sojourn at Crake, north of York, which had been given by King Egfrid to the Saint on the day of his episcopal consecration, Bishop Eardulph fixed his residence at Chester-le-Street. King Alfred's victories over the Danes having secured peace, he and the Danish King Guthred jointly bestowed the land between the Tyne and Wear as a perpetual possession to St. Cuthbert and those who should serve his Church. The Saxon Kings vied with each other in honouring the shrine, which was undisturbed for one hundred and thirteen years. After that time, again on account of the Danes, the body was once more carried forth over hill and dale for about four months, when it was made known to the travellers that Dunholme or Durham was to be the permanent resting-place of the Saint.

The whole story is full of interest. The spot where later rose the great Cathedral was then uninhabited and thickly wooded. A chapel of boughs was first built through the piety and energy of the neighbouring people, and soon with the help of the powerful Earl of Northumberland, the land was cleared and a temporary church was put up. A stone one, built by Bishop Aldhune, was solemnly dedicated in 999. In 1069, the monks fled with the body from the wrath of William the Conqueror for three months to Lindisfarne, after which they returned in safety, and in 1094, the homely church built by Aldhune was pulled down and the first stones of the present glorious pile were laid by Bishop Carileph, by Malcolm Canmore, King of Scotland, and by Turgot Prior of Durham (afterwards confessor to Malcolm's Queen, St. Margaret). The Cathedral was not completed till 1242, but the body, which had been laid

in a temporary though splendid shrine during the process of building, was transferred with great magnificence within the precincts as early as 1104, and on that occasion several solemn examinations before Bishops, monks, and laity took place, when the marvel was once again attested.

The monks and prior had prepared for the opening of the coffin by fasting and prayer; a preliminary examination took place at night. After undoing the outer coffin, which had been added five centuries before and the ancient wooden one within, they beheld the copy of the Gospels which had been put on the body. They hardly dared to proceed, so great was their awe. With tears of joy they moved the linen cloth, when a wondrous sweet odour was exhaled and lo! on his right side, and as if he slept, whole and entire lay the great patriarch Saint of Northumbria. His episcopal robes of rich silken tissue and rare colours were also perfectly preserved. The monks prostrated themselves on the ground and recited the penitential psalms. The body was flexible, solid and fresh coloured, and when they carried it, bent in the middle from its own weight. The wonder was confirmed in the presence of all the next day in further public examination by the Bishop.

As the ages went on, fresh architectural glories were added to the great Cathedral, till the evil days of Henry VIII.; when at the suppression of the monasteries, Durham shared the fate of the rest. The Cathedral was despoiled of its treasures and property. Henry's commissioners broke open the shrine, stole the jewels and costly property, and laid violent hands on the body of which they broke the limbs. They bore witness, however, that "he was lying whole," and not only whole and incorrupt, but "his vestments he had on wherein he said Mass were fresh and safe and not consumed." These words are taken from their written depositions. The body was buried in a vault, under the place where the shrine had been, the king's pleasure having been taken on the subject.

A constant tradition has it that during the temporary restoration of religion under Mary, the monks took away and hid the body. It is said that the secret

of its resting place was handed down among certain members of the Benedictine Order in England, otherwise that resting-place remains unknown. Much has been said about the informal opening of the aforesaid vault in 1827, by a couple of the Protestant prebendaries of the Cathedral, accompanied by one or two other gentlemen and some workmen. It was then found that an opening had previously been made in the further end of the vault, which opening had been refilled by loose stones. Coffins, a skeleton and other bones (such as a skull and bones of children), differing in essential ways from anything handed down by tradition about St. Cuthbert were found in it. It would be impossible to go into the question here, and we must content ourselves with referring our readers to the exhaustive analysis of the proceedings on that occasion by Archbishop Eyre in his learned work on St. Cuthbert, and ask our readers with him if it was likely that the monks of the days of Mary and Elizabeth, who knew that their brethren in former centuries had wandered for years carrying the body of St. Cuthbert with them according to his dying wish sooner than leave it to the spoilers, would have failed to remove the venerated relics from a place of such danger as the vault where they were known to have been deposited? It is devoutly to be hoped that the day may yet come when we shall be able to honour his glorious relics in a fitting manner, and that the Catholics of England and Scotland may not be deprived for ever of their precious inheritance.

Glorious Saint Cuthbert, pray for your people of the English and Scottish borders! Stir them as you did of old. Light the beacon of faith on their hills, and spread the knowledge of the Truth more and more among them!